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School Counselors Lived Experience of a Rampage School Shooting

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School Counselors Lived Experience of a Rampage School Shooting

A dissertation proposal submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Counselor Education

by

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Abstract

Minimal research has been conducted to examine school counselors' lived experiences of rampage school shootings. The purpose of this research is to increase school counselors' knowledge and skills in responding effectively to such a crisis. A single-case qualitative dissertation study was completed at a rampage school shooting site, a middle school, and the immediate surrounding area in Bono, AR, located in the northeast part of Arkansas. School counselors' decisions, perceived expertness, and lessons learned were investigated. Data collected included relevant research literature (including comparison research), archival records, direct observation, media reports, and interviews. Participants interviewed were individuals who lived through the crisis: two previous elementary school counselors, the previous middle school counselor, the previous middle school principal, the previous school psychologist, the previous elementary school art teacher and bus driver, a parent of a previous middle school student, and a previous middle school student. Theoretical integration was used as an analytical strategy and assisted in interpreting the data. A working conceptual framework was generated from the study, the 'School Counselors' Response to School Shootings' framework (S.C.R.S.S.). The conceptual framework provides informed and helpful actions that school counselors may take for preparation, in-crisis protocol, and post-crisis responses to a rampage school shooting. Other benefiteres of the study include crisis response planners, school crisis teams, counselor educators, researchers, school counselor supervisors, counselor crisis leaders, principals, superintendents, and state and national counseling organizations. Recommendations for implementation, practice, and further research are included.

Acknowledgments

There are many individuals whom I would like to acknowledge from a professional perspective as well as a personal one. My intent is to be brief in words yet comprehensive in list of persons to acknowledge. I apologize in advance to anyone I may have accidentally omitted.

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From a professional perspective, there are so many individuals who have positively impacted my counseling career up to this point. I am grateful for each person and to fate for allowing our paths to cross. I am indebted to the community of my research site, advisors and dissertation committee, research consultants and educators, professional moral support agents, peers, and the counseling profession.

Research site

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Personal

Family

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the school districts and communities that have been impacted by the senseless violent act of a rampage school shooting. It is dedicated,

- To the memory of lives lost, especially the innocent children, who were robbed of the opportunity to fulfill their promise and potential as well as the educators and staff members who sacrificed their lives in the honorable pursuit of providing a bright future for our children.
- To the deceased, I hope to honor you in memory and efforts in improving our society by making it safer and remembering that we are all one family in the human race.
- To the parents of lost ones who still suffer in silence, to all crisis survivors who battle survivors' guilt and whose lives have undoubtedly changed forever. To you my heart breaks and I express heartfelt sympathies for the losses and suffering that you have encountered. I hope and pray you find comfort and some measure of peace as time goes by.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Chapter I begins with an introduction and brief background of rampage school shootings. Chapter I's break down continues with the statement of the problem, intent of the research, and significant questions of inquiry; then, a brief description of the methodology, information pertaining to previous knowledge of similar studies, and a comprehensive theoretical framework for counselors are provided. Next, the author gives reasons for the importance of the research at hand. Chapter I also includes an explanation of the theoretical sensitivity and assumptions of the study as well as the defining of critical terms to assist the reader. Chapter I concludes with a summary and an explanation of the overall organization of the dissertation.

In introducing and providing a brief background of the topic, offering a definition of a school rampage shooting is beneficial. Newman et al. (2004), defined rampage shootings as an involvement of attacks on "multiple parties, selected almost at random" (p. 15). According to Langman (2009), rampage school shootings became part of mainstream America in the 1990s. In fact, the term "school shootings" became a common phrase during the 1990s as a result of the unusual flurry of rampage school attacks during the academic year of 1997–1998. Of the attacks during this time period, the deadliest rampage school shooting occurred at Westside Middle School in Northeast Arkansas; the assailants opened fire on 96 of their classmates and teachers; four students and a teacher died while 10 other individuals were injured (Fox et al., 2003).

Statement of the Problem

Since then, much research has been done investigating the cause of the attack, but limited research has been done to examine the lived experience of school counselors involved in a rampage school shooting. In fact, Daniels et al. (2007, p. 483) state, "there has been no research conducted on the school counselor's response to an armed hostage event". As a result, the

authors completed one study on a school counselor's response to such a crisis situation. A recent query has shown only one other study that addresses school counselors' response to rampage school shooting; the study resulted from a dissertation completed by A. H. Fein in 2001.

Newman et al. (2004) completed case study research on rampage school shootings and found that other school personnel could learn a great deal from school officials' lived experiences of a rampage school shooting. In respect to school counselors' roles in such a tragedy, there is a need to learn from these experiences and close the gap between lessons learned and crisis response and preparation for rampage school shootings.

In fact, Allen et al. (2002) successfully surveyed 236 participants who were members of the American School Counselor Association and had experience as school counselors. Their questions addressed crisis preparation in the following areas: university preparation, continuing professional development, participation in school crisis intervention, and recommendations for counselor education. Results indicated that the divide between knowledge and skills important for effectively responding in crisis response and preparation for counselors is wide.

Purpose of the Study

School counselors are in a unique position to assist positively in crisis circumstances (American School Counselor Association (ASCA), 2013). School counselors have an ethical and professional duty to provide counseling services in crisis situations as in school rampage shootings (ASCA, 2012). However, the gap between knowledge and skills important for effectively responding in crisis response and preparation for counselors is wide (Allen et al., 2002); therefore, the intent of this case study is not only to explain school counselors' response to a rampage school shooting, but in doing so, offer understanding and meaning of such an experience to other school counselors who may experience a rampage school shooting; thus,

increasing school counselors' knowledge and skills in responding effectively to a rampage school shooting.

Research Questions

The central question for this study is “how did school counselors respond to a rampage school shooting?” The question’s subject, school counselors, is the primary focus of this investigation. The question’s aim is to reveal the tangible experience of the primary participants. Two sub-questions are essential to guide the researcher and provide specific integral details: A) what actions were taken by school counselors upon first hearing of a possible school shooting to the immediate aftermath of a rampage school shooting? B) What are the lessons learned from school counselors’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting?

Overview of Methodology

The current study is a qualitative case study centered on the rampage school shooting that took place on March 24th, 1998 in Bono, Arkansas near Jonesboro, Arkansas. The three primary interviewees worked as school counselors during the 1997–1998 academic year; one school counselor worked at the middle school in which the incident took place and the other two school counselors worked at an elementary school within walking distance of the middle school. All three school counselors lived through the tragic event.

The data collection procedures, data analysis methods, and units of analysis are important aspects of this study’s methodology. The data collection procedures include obtaining multiple sources of evidence, such as interviews, documents, and archival documents. Data analysis for this study relies on a theoretical proposition and a time series analysis. For the study at hand, the units of analysis are *decisions (or courses of action taken)* and *perceived expertness of*

counselors who experienced the West Middle School rampage school shooting incident. More information regarding the methodology for this study is explained in Chapter III.

Theoretical Framework

Newman et al. (2004) suggested the formation of a post-shooting crisis plan that specifically includes counselors. McAdams and Keener (2008) reviewed national and state standards for professional counselors and found inconsistency in expectations for counselors responding to clients' crisis situations; the authors integrated research of mental health crisis phase progression, coordination of phase-specific intervention, structured support of survivors of crisis, and mandatory counselor responsibilities in developing a conceptual framework for counselor preparation and response to client crisis. The conceptual framework is PAR or *preparation, action, and recovery* and it consists of six phases: pre-crisis preparation, pre-crisis awareness, in-crisis protocol, in-crisis awareness, post-crisis recovery, and post-crisis awareness (2008).

This researcher used the PAR conceptual framework to assist in interpreting the findings of the current research. Two other studies have examined the lived experience of school counselors involved in a school shooting to report lessons learned from the field: *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor's response* by Daniels et al. (2007), and Fein's 2001 dissertation on school leaders' lived experience of school shootings in which Fein and collaborators conceptualized his findings specific to school counselors in a 2008 article entitled, *School shootings and counselor leadership: Four lessons from the field*. This researcher used these articles to assist in interpreting the findings of the current study. Although not a peer-reviewed study, Austin (2003), a school counselor, experienced the aftermath of the Columbine school rampage shooting and wrote a self-report

about her experience as well as her fellow school counselors' experience of the tragedy. Her report served as a supplement to the two peer-reviewed case studies in helping to interpret findings for this study. Lastly, rampage school shootings became popular in the media during the academic year of 1997–1998. The deadliest of those school shootings is the subject at hand; however, describing the rampage shootings that occurred during the same time period will assist in providing context for this study. There were specifically five other rampage school shootings during the 97–98 academic year, which will be discussed further in Chapter II.

Significance of the Study

There has been limited research completed to gain understanding and meaning from school counselors' lived experience of rampage school shootings. The current study will add to the small knowledge base and theory building concepts regarding school counselors' response to rampage school shootings, and provide important information to the national conversation pertaining to school safety. Beneficiaries of the research at hand include, but are not limited to, school crisis teams, crisis response planners, researchers, counselor educators, administrators, as well as school counselors (administrators are defined here as formal leaders such as counselor supervisors or assigned counselor crisis leaders, principals, and superintendents).

Theoretical Sensitivity and Assumptions

The researcher's background, experience, and current position are uniquely beneficial for studying the topic of interest. The researcher has two master degrees, one in secondary education and the other in counseling education. The researcher has worked as an educator in various school settings including alternative school, high schools, middle school, and an elementary school. The teacher was a secondary school English teacher for a number of years before becoming a middle school counselor and eventually an elementary school counselor. The

researcher is still a certified secondary school English teacher and certified pre-k through 12th grade school counselor. The researcher is also a licensed associate counselor or community counselor.

Currently, the researcher is in the process of earning a doctoral degree in counselor education. Because of the researcher's experience as a school counselor in working with crisis plans, the researcher has been invited to educational settings to deliver presentations on crisis plans and general topics of school counseling to future practitioners. Because of the researcher's interest and research in the area of crisis situations, specifically, school shootings, the researcher has delivered four additional presentations on the topic of school shootings at state and national conferences (Arkansas School Counseling Association, Arkansas Counseling Association, American Counseling Association, and American School Counselor Association). As the current president of the Arkansas Counseling Association (ArCA), the largest counseling organization in the state of Arkansas, which is made up of school counselors and mental health clinicians, the researcher is often asked to consult on counseling topics and advocate for problematic concerns pertaining to counselors. The researcher believes school safety is an important issue for the state of Arkansas and research must be done to educate and inform best practices for counselors dealing with the potential of another school shooting within the state of Arkansas and the greater society.

Definition of Terms

The following list of definitions of terms is offered to provide clarity and assistance to the reader in exploring the remaining sections of the dissertation:

- Decisions—courses of actions taken by school counselors in delivering direct and indirect counseling services in respect to a crisis situation.

- Informal School Leaders—school personnel without formal authority via their position (Fein, 2001).
- Perceived Expertness (or professional competencies)—knowledge, attitudes, skills, and ethical guidelines used by school counselors in decision-making of client needs; in this study, decision-making is specific to a crisis situation (American School Counselor Association (ASCA), 2012).
- Leakage—occurs when an assailant attempts to recruit a friend to assist with a rampage school shooting; also occurs when an assailant informs people to keep away from the school on a particular day (Langman, 2009).
- Rampage School Shooting—a public tragic event, with possible intended but definitely unintended harm to others, shot randomly or symbolic of the school by students or previous students of his or her own school. Such events do not involve a two-person feud that results in a single shooting of the other (Langman, 2009).
- Risk Factors—previous factors that “increase the risk of occurrence of events such as the onset, frequency, persistence, or duration of offending [or school shooting—for this study]” (Farrington, 1997, p. 382).
- School-Based Mental Health Counselors—licensed, master degree level (minimum), mental health counselor who works for a community mental health service provider that receives school referrals and has a school-based program. Different from a school counselor, school-based mental health counselors provide remedial or long-term intervention services (Carlson & Kees, 2013).
- School Counselor—Certified, master degree level (minimum), educators who address “students’ academic, career, and personal/social development needs” by way of a

comprehensive school counseling program (ASCA, n.d.b, p. 1); school counselors do not offer therapy or long-term counseling, but they do “recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs” through “education, prevention, and crisis and short-term interventions” and connect students as needed to community resources (ASCA, 2012, p. 86).

- School Crisis—A traumatic happening that may cause physical or emotional pain, generate a sense of loss of control, and occurs “suddenly, unexpectedly, and without warning” within or outside of a school (Brock et al., 2009, p. 2).
- Single Case Study—is akin to a single experiment and one rationale is that it represents an important addition to knowledge and theory building (Yin, 2009).
- Threat Assessment—a decision or assessment of the risk level based on facts, including information gathered from important school stakeholders as well as parents and the student making the threat (Daniels, 2002).

Summary and Overall Organization

The contents in Chapter I are informative and give attention to the problematic lack of research pertaining to school counselors’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting; it also gives context to the researcher’s work in helping to address the issue at hand by offering an introduction to the fundamental ideas of the current study. The preceding chapter situates the study in its proper place within previous research and scholarship in relation to rampage school shootings. Chapter II synthesizes relevant findings and makes clear how the current research assists in closing the gap of school counselors’ knowledge and preparation in crisis circumstances, particularly in responding to a rampage school shooting. Lastly, Chapter II elaborates on the conceptual framework used by the researcher. In Chapter III, the author gives

an explanation on how the study fits a qualitative single case study methodology. It details the study's setting, sample, data collection methods, and data analysis procedures. Chapter IV gives a succinct explanation of the researcher's findings, which include examples of qualitative data collected. Chapter V offers a discussion of the findings as they relate to the research questions, previous research, and conceptual framework. The last section of the dissertation includes statements of conclusion and recommendations.

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section will detail and explain further the history of violence that has led up to rampage school shootings. This section also addresses the impact of the series of rampage school shootings of the late 90s, the history of the phrase, “rampage school shootings”, and the important considerations of rampage school shooters. Furthermore, Chapter II gives attention to the focus on prevention, the focus on the tragic aftermath of rampage school shootings, the limited research of school counselors’ responses to rampage school shootings, and conceptual frameworks to guide counselors in crisis situations.

Rampage school shootings became popular in the media during the academic year of 1997–1998. The deadliest of those school shootings is the subject at hand; however, reviewing the history and research of rampage shootings will provide context for this study’s focus on school counselors and their roles in the aftermath of a rampage school shooting. There have been two studies that have examined the lived experience of school counselors involved in rampage school shootings and a hostage situation to report lessons learned from the field; they will be explored. Lastly, conceptual frameworks will be discussed in greater detail as one is used to assist in interpreting the findings of the current research.

Research Techniques

Between 1992 and 2001, 35 situations happened in which students appeared at their school or school event and began firing at their peers and educators. Congress asked the National Research Council to examine these tragedies. The Department of Education asked the National Academy of Sciences to do in-depth studies over these crisis circumstances. The Academy contacted Dr. Katherine S. Newman to explore findings. Newman, along with Fox, Harding, Mehta, and Roth, in 2004, detailed their findings in the book, *Rampage: The social roots of*

school shootings. Building on the research of Newman et al. and the National Research Council Institute, Dr. Peter Langman explored the psychological and emotional states of shooters of those involved in rampage shootings in his 2009 text, *Why kids kill: Inside the minds of school shootings*. This researcher used these two texts as primary texts in exploring the history of rampage shootings during the 1997–1998 academic years. The researcher also utilized Fein’s (2001) dissertation entitled, *There and back again: A phenomenological inquiry of school shootings as experienced by school leaders*, and Daniel et al.’s (2007) research, *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor’s response* as limited examples of research completed on school counselors’ response to school shootings and a hostage situation. Other main sources include information collected from the National Center for Education Statistics as well as from materials gathered from reliable departments of the U.S. government.

The researcher searched for secondary sources using the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville Library databases such as EBSCO and ProQuest as well as ERIC, PsycINFO, PsychArticles, SAGE Journals, and the Professional School Counseling Journal, American Behavioral Scientists, and Google Scholar using keywords such as, “‘Violence’ and ‘Shooting’ and ‘school counselors’”, “School Shootings”, “School Violence”, “Rampage Shootings”, “Rampage Killings”, “Rampage Attacks”, “Violence Prevention”, “Case Studies in School Shootings” “School Safety”, “School Crisis”, “Westside Shooting”, “Jonesboro School Shooting”, “Andrew Golden” and “Mitchell Johnson”, “Risk Assessments”, “Threat Assessments”, “Post-School Shooting Guides”, “Violence in the Media”, “Guns”, “Guns in Schools”, “Bullying”, “Risk Factors”, “School Security”, “Gun-Free Acts”, “School Resource Officers”, “American School Counselor Association” and “Crisis”, “School Counselor Crisis

Plan”, “School Counselor Crisis Guide”, “Mental Health Crisis Plan”. Lastly, the researcher searched site engines such as Google and Bing to gather news and media reports specific to the rampage school shootings.

A Brief History of Youth Violence: 1800s to the 1990s

Gurr (1981) completed a critical review of several studies done on early America’s propensity for violence through analysis of historical records such as court cases, war files, and police records. Gurr’s research paints an image of violent crime in nineteenth-century America as “a stable or declining trend with a pronounced upward swing” that occurred right before the Civil War and continued into the 1870s (p. 324). Gurr concludes that social violence becomes a greater concern as marginal groups and youth become desensitized to violence.

Gurr’s concern regarding youth violence was shared by other researchers. By the mid-70s, information regarding school violence became more accessible to researchers; thus, giving researchers the chance to make scientific inferences of trends and comparisons particularly concerning youth violence. In fact, in 1976, the National Institute of Education completed an expansive study entitled *Safe Schools*. The Safe Schools research gathered data on 31,373 students and 23,895 teachers in early and secondary schools throughout the nation (ICPSR, 2002).

According to Jackson (1980), the Safe Schools’ report included information pertaining to Safe Schools’ researchers who had completed an extensive field study covering 10 schools that involved detailed interviews with school counselors and other stakeholders. The director of these field studies, Professor A. J. Lanni, concluded that there was only a small percentage of disruptive students, about 10 percent, who were responsible for violence in schools with no identifiable profile.

It appears that the number of violent students has grown since Professor A. J. Lanni's conclusions. McAdams (2002) completed a study that entailed sending a four page survey to 1000 individuals made up of school principals, assistant principals, and experienced clinical service providers and supervisors. The instrument addressed trends and frequency of different types of aggression in youths. The findings were significant and the study indicated that the frequency of youth aggression in schools and clinical settings had increased since the early 80s.

Youth aggression has shown to manifest itself in deadly ways. Dinkes, Kemp, & Baum (2009) generated an Indicators of School Crime and Safety report for the National Center for Education Statistics that pulled from a variety of information sources that included national surveys of students, teachers, and principals. Their findings highlighted the fluctuation of the number of school-associated deaths of students, staff, and nonstudents between the years of 1992 and 2008. The results show an increase in violent crime before 1999 and a decrease in incidents of violent crime in schools between 1999 to 2002; between 2003 and 2008, levels of violent crime in schools increased again to similar levels of violent crime before 1999.

A component associated with the periods of increase in violent youth crimes involves the use of deadly weapons. Kann et al. (1995) published the Youth Risk Surveillance Systems (YRSS) report, which included a national, school-based survey by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention as well as state and local school-based surveys by state and local agencies. The report included findings from the period of February through May 1993 and included information regarding students and deadly weapons. According to the YRSS report, approximately one fourth (22.1%) of students nationwide carried a weapon (e.g., a gun, knife, or club) during the 30 days preceding the survey; also, nationwide nearly 8% of students carried a gun during the 30 days preceding the survey; a similar percentage (7.3%) of students were

threatened or injured with a weapon on school grounds during the 12 months preceding the survey. Another YRSS report was completed in 1995, the results were slightly lower. One-fifth (20%) of students nationwide had carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club during the 30 days preceding the survey (Kann et al., 1996).

These statistics had the potential to appear troubling (as youths with weapons on school campuses appeared to trend down), but the increase in guns involved in community violence and incidents of school shootings generated greater concerns. Incidents of disturbed adults who carried firearms onto school campuses were included in the build up to the federal Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990. According to Hetzner (2011), while presenting legislation to formulate the federal Gun-Free School Zones Act, the U.S. Wisconsin Senator Herb Kohl stated the necessity to combat the “growing problem ... [of t]he proliferation of firearms in our schools.” Senator Kohl mentioned the shooting case of Laurie Dann, who murdered an eight-year old child and injured five other students at a Winnetka, Illinois elementary school during the month of May, 1988. This case was indeed an isolated one. However, according to Midlarsky and Klain (2005), other isolated events of school shootings had taken place in the United States since at least 1956 when Billy Ray Prevatte shot three teachers at a junior high school. In 1979, Brenda Spencer shot rapid-fire shots at people standing in front of a San Diego elementary school (Fast, 2008). However, there were incidents of youth school shootings on school campuses. For instance, according to Fast (2008), a high school student, Anthony Barbaro, murdered three individuals in his high school in New York in 1974. As a matter of fact, regarding lethal youth violence beyond the school campus, between the mid-80s and the mid-90s, lethal youth violence exploded in the inner-city communities and concerns for school safety were warranted (Moore, Petrie, Braga, & McLaughlin, 2003). In this respect, Senator Kohl

included in his presentation for the Gun-Free School Zones Act of 1990 to legislatures information of concern regarding youth's potential for violence on school campuses; a portion of his exact words:

My home state, Wisconsin, is not immune from this wave of gun violence. Last year, the Milwaukee school system expelled more than a dozen students for weapons violations. And the number of Milwaukee County juveniles charged with handgun possession has doubled over the past two years. According to Gerald Morning, the director of school safety for Milwaukee, "[K]ids who did their fighting with their fists, and perhaps knives, are now settling their arguments with guns" (Hetzner, 2011, p. 361).

The legislation eventually passed and would be amended in years to come (Hetzner, 2011). According to the Office of the Surgeon General (2001), referring to youth with guns, there were moments of upsurge and decline in the use of firearms and weapons from 1980 to 2000; Rocque (2012), examined the literature related to youth violence from the late 20th century to the present and found that one of the aspects associated with the upsurge of firearms and weapons was the growing incidents of school shootings, specifically the events of rampage shootings by youths, which would become an unprecedented national crisis by the mid to late 90s.

Influence of the 1990s

Agnich and Miyazaki (2013) completed research covering 39 nation-units from the 2007 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study survey. The researchers discovered that school shootings are more predominant in the United States than any other country. According to research completed by Newman et al. (2004), there was a sequence of six tragic events of school shootings on 7th–12th grade school campuses, later differentiated from school shootings as rampage school shootings, during the late 90s that changed perceptions of school shootings from isolated events to an American epidemic. Allen et al. (2008) give more specific statistics explaining that since 1996, almost 60 school shootings have occurred in the nation's schools,

causing hundreds of deaths; during the years of 1996 through 2005, 17 school shootings were carried out by students, resulting in many victims; there was a death toll of 39 youths, 13 adults, 111 injured, as well as many persons suffering from psychological traumas, grief, and a loss of a sense of safety. As concluded by Rocque's (2012) findings, since the mid-90s, citizens of the United States have obtained the perspective that schools are places of potential harm.

1997–98 Rampage School Shootings

There were six deadly school rampage shootings on secondary school campuses during the late 90s that changed the way American's viewed school safety.

According to Newman et al. (2004),

On October 1, 1997, sixteen-year-old Luke Woodham of Pearl, Mississippi, killed his mother, came to school, and shot nine students, killing two. One month later, Michael Carneal killed three and wounded five in West Paducah, Kentucky. Fourteen-year-old Joseph Todd shot two students in Stamps, Arkansas, two weeks after Michael's rampage. Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden left four students and a teacher dead and wounded ten others near Jonesboro, AR. A few weeks later, fourteen-year-old Andrew Wurst of Edinboro, Pennsylvania, killed a teacher and wounded three students at a school dance. The killing season for that year ended on May 21 when fifteen-year-old Kip Kinkel murdered his parents and then went on a shooting spree in his Springfield, Oregon, school cafeteria, killing two students and wounding twenty-five. (p. 47).

Langman (2009) completed an extensive study of rampage school shootings; his study found that because of the consecutive tragic school shootings that included multiple victims in the late 90s, the term "rampage school shootings" was born and became a pivotal phrase in the American cultural landscape (Langman, 2009).

Defining Rampage School Shootings

Rampage shootings can be defined separately from terrorism and school shootings (although often referred to as school shootings interchangeably); rampage shootings happen on a "public stage before an audience" and may include victims who were "chosen for their symbolic

significance or targeted at random” (Newman et al., 2004, p. 330). In other words, in school rampage shootings, troubled youths methodically plan and murder multiple peers, teachers, or other victims who were simply in the wrong place during the time of the shooting (Craig-Henderson, 2013).

Rampage shootings may also be called targeted school shootings or barricaded captive situations or hostage situations perpetrated by a student of youth or adult student (Nader & Nader, 2012). However, there are still important differences to keep in mind regarding rampage school shootings and targeted school shootings. Langman (2009) makes clear the definition of rampage school shooting and its distinctions.

Langman (2009), asks the question, “What exactly is a rampage school shooting?” (p. 2). They happen when school-aged students or former school pupils attack their own educational establishment or school. The attacks are public violent actions, executed in plain sight of others. Furthermore, although some persons may be shot from the result of the shooters’ grudge against them, others are harmed randomly or as symbols of the school’s function (such as a principal). Rampage school shootings do not involve two individuals engulfed in a fight that leaves one attempting gunfire on the other. Targeted school shootings that are expressed by way of gangs, drug deals, or boyfriend/girlfriend problems are not considered rampage school shootings. According to Langman (2009), placing rampage and targeted attacks in the same research complicates a study; the two should be considered different to draw meaningful conclusions. In his research, Langman solidified the definition of rampage school shootings by presenting 10 deadly shooters, which includes ones from the late 90s, that fit the definition of rampage school shootings to gain understanding of the shooters and explore ways of preventing such attacks.

About Rampage School Shooters

As America was attempting to gain an understanding of the tragic rampage shooting events of the late 90s, it became evident that the 1997–98 rampage school shootings were just the tipping point of a line of even more deadly rampage school shootings to come. One of the most memorable was the 1999 Columbine High School rampage shooting. The shooters murdered 12 students and one teacher, and wounded 23 others (Langman, 2009). The Columbine shooting would go on to serve as a blueprint for other such tragic events. According to Larkin (2009), school rampage shootings expanded beyond North America to Europe, Australia, and Argentina, after the Columbine shootings, with many shooters using the Columbine event as inspiration; there were more shootings on university campuses as well as non-school venues. For instance, not soon after Columbine, in 2007, a student by the name of Cho Sueng-Hui murdered 33 students as well as himself at Virginia Tech (Nader & Nader, 2012).

Langman (2009) selected 10 shooters to study whose attacks uniquely fit the definition of rampage school shootings. Many of the shooters were from the 1997–98 academic year, but he also included the Columbine shooters, from the 1999 incident, an incident in 2005, an incident that took place in Bethel, Alaska, and the Virginia Tech shooter, from the tragic 2007 event. The 10 shooters Langman selected in total killed over 70 people and wounded 92 (Langman, 2009) (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1

Langman's (2009) Shooters

Perpetrators (age, location)	Shooting Details
Evan Ramsey (16, Bethel, AL)	Suicidal Informed friends Developed hit list Killed student, principal Wounded two students Decided against suicide

	In prison
Michael Carneal, (14, West Paducah, KY)	Informed friends Carried five firearms Killed three students Wounded five students Asked to be shot Two failed suicide attempts In prison
Andrew Golden (11, Bono, AR), Mitchell Johnson (13, Bono, AR)	Sniper attack Killed teacher, four students Wounded teacher, nine students Convicted as juveniles Released, free men
Andrew Wurst, (14, Edinboro, PA)	Wrote suicide note Used pistol Killed teacher Wounded teacher, two students In prison
Kip Kinkel, (15, Springfield, OR)	Used gun Killed parents Killed two students Wounded 25 Failed suicide attempt Asked to be shot In prison for life
Eric Harris (18, Jefferson County, CO) Dylan Klebold (17, Jefferson County, CO)	Attempted use of bombs Most bombs did not work Used guns instead Killed teacher, 12 students Wounded 23 students Both committed suicide
Jeffrey Weise (16, Red Lake, MI)	Killed grandfather Killed grandfather's girlfriend Killed security guard, teacher, five students Wounded seven students Committed suicide
Sueng-Hui Cho (23, Blacksburg, VA)	Mailed manifesto to NBC News Killed 32, students and professors Wounded 17 others Committed suicide

One prevention approach that researchers and law enforcement have attempted to craft is creating a profile of potential shooters who fit the criteria for rampage school shootings to

recognize and address issues with potential shooters before they act; according to Langman (2009), it is challenging to create a shooter's profile based on rampage school shooters; however, they do have some similarities: ages range from 11 to 23, most are Caucasian, come from solid, intact, middle-class families, most killed exclusively at school, and most were suicidal. In fact, the desired response for almost all of the shooters was that they expected to die (Rocque, 2012). Based on Lankford's (2013) study, suicide terrorists, rampage shooters, and school shooters are most likely to attempt suicide after an attack.

During Langman's (2009) studies, he recognized that there were specific characteristics that certain shooters shared and many parallels between the shooters' family backgrounds, personalities, and psychological issues. Langman was able to distinguish the shooters into distinct clusters. Within each group, the perpetrators have numerous common features; however, they have little in common across groups. Based on his findings, there are three various types of school rampage shooters: psychopathic, psychotic, and traumatized. Langman went on to break down the 10 shooters from his research.

Psychopathic shooters included Andrew Golden and Eric Harris; they each were sadistic, expressed impression management, narcissistic, had anger management problems, and a superiority complex. Dylan Klebold was more of a schizotypal shooter; however, by aligning his person with that of Eric Harris, he became a weak psychopath. Ultimately, Dylan belongs in the psychotic shooters category (Langman, 2009).

Psychotic shooters included Dylan Klebold, Kip Kinkel, Michael Carneal, Andrew Wurst, and Sueng-Hui Cho. They suffered from paranoia and a mix of other symptoms. For instance, Sueng had delusions of grandeur and Kip, Andrew, and Michael experienced

hallucinations. All of the psychotic types had myriad levels of social impairment that encouraged their alienation and despair (Langman, 2009).

Traumatized shooters included Evan Ramsey, Jeffrey Weise, and Mitchell Johnson. Each of these individuals suffered emotional and physical abuse at their respective homes. Two of the three boys, Mitchell and Evan, were sexually abused or raped. Other factors they had in common: substance-abusing parents and moved around often (2009). Studies that examine the shooters that engage in rampage school shootings have been encouraging to those seeking to grasp a way to prevent such tragic events.

Focus on Understanding: Profiles and Theories

In reacting to the public outcry of concern pertaining to rampage school shootings, especially from the late 90s, the United States congress encouraged research and detailed studies that would explore reasons for these unusual happenings (Moore et al., 2003). Since then, there has been ongoing research attempting to establish theories and profiles of rampage school shooters. Research promoting psychological profiles has sparked debate regarding psychological theories of school shooters. Psychological profiles and theories are by far the most essential theories created to help understand rampage school shootings as by-products of mental illness (Rocque, 2012); case studies of these tragic events show seriously troubled youths (Harding et al., 2003). Others have indicated that while psychological issues are less likely noticed before shootings, most of the rampage shooters are diagnosed after the tragic event and thus mental illness is not a simple indicator of school shootings (Newman et al., 2004). For instance, Michael Carneal did not present with psychological problems before the school shooting he committed; however, after the shooting, it was found that his father's side of the family had a history of mental illness; furthermore, Carneal was evaluated by forensic psychiatrists and two different

defense experts concluded that he understood the consequences from his crimes but he was “mentally ill at the time of the shooting; the prosecution’s psychiatric team disagreed” (p. 59). In 2004, Carneal was in prison, had developed full-blown schizophrenia, and was taking antipsychotic medication. Needless to say, psychological profiles are only one factor in helping to understand school rampage shooters.

Cultural/Sociological Theory

Psychological theories are one explanation for school rampage shooters; two other existing theories include cultural/sociological theories and risk factor categories. According to Rocque (2012), researchers have identified five factors to help explain rampage school shooter’s actions in regard to cultural/sociological theory. Those factors are availability of guns, violent media, bullying, social psychological notion of imitation, and the masculine identity.

Guns. Researchers have been able to gather data significantly proving a causal factor or contributing factor but not as the only factor in contributing to rampage school shootings. According to Kann et al.’s (1996) Youth Risk Surveillance Systems report of the mid-90s, one-fifth (20%) of students nationwide had carried a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club during the 30 days preceding the survey. However, according to the Office of the Surgeon General (2001), the trend of students carrying guns decreased and then leveled off by 1999 to 7%.

Newman et al. (2004) explain that the production of guns has increased dramatically since the 1970s to about 200 million; yet, gun ownership by adults have stayed relatively the same since 1980 at about 30%; although it is the highest proportion in the world, it has not altered much over time. National surveys make it clear that over 20% of students affirm that guns are easy to obtain.

During the 1997–98 academic year in which six consecutive rampage school shootings took place, the shooting that took place near Jonesboro, Arkansas was the deadliest. Newman et al. (2004) completed interviews in the community after the event; based on the interviews, “almost all of the kids in [this community] told us that it would be very easy for them to get a gun” (p. 69). The researchers also interviewed the students in the community in which a shooting took place in 1997 in West Paducah, Kentucky and found the same results. Even more, the students who committed the tragic shooting in the rural area near Jonesboro, AR, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden, were able to obtain many firearms; although, their parents’ guns were secured in a safe or by a cable. Michael Carneal, the student who committed the shooting in the West Paducah community, obtained an arsenal of “nine weapons and thousands of rounds of ammunition by stealing them from his father and a neighbor” (p. 69). The availability and use of firearms were a normal part of the community, which according to Newman et al. (2004) is a factor in explaining why students who noticed Michael with a gun before the tragic event did not inform adults.

Guns are an aspect of concern in relation to the shootings; however, it is not certain that gun availability is the reason for the disturbing happenings that are taking place in schools; hunting communities have always included a culture of guns, but there has not always been youth aggression in the form of rampage school shootings (Newman et al., 2004).

Violence in media. The second factor identified by Rocque (2012) is the violence in media. Rideout, Foehr, Roberts, and Brodie (1999) prepared a report based on a comprehensive national public study. The study sampled over 3000 youths aged 2–18 and illustrated time spent on using or viewing technology such as watching television and movies, playing video games, and other ways pupils utilize media. Findings indicate that at the time of the report, children

spent more than 38 hours a week utilizing media; this figure does not include media use in schools. The term media refers to electronic media such as television, videos, movies, music, computers, and video games. The report also makes it clear that the television is on “most of the time” in 42% of children’s homes and the television is on during meal time in 58% of children’s homes; for older children (ages 8 and up), 65% of them state the television is on during meal time. Nearly half of the children reported that they do not have any rules or restrictions regarding how much or what type of television programming they may watch. Children over seven reported that 95% of the time, they watch television without a parent present.

Although, Rideout et al.’s (1999) findings are relevant; they also note that “no causality can be inferred from these data. We cannot say, for example whether TV causes kids to get into trouble, whether getting into trouble leads to watching more TV, or whether something else entirely leads to watching more TV and getting into trouble” (p. 37).

Although children watch a vast amount of television, use of video games is increasing. Tween children (8 to 13), especially boys, are averaging more hours per week than other children (Robert et al., 1999). Anderson and Bushman (2001) completed a meta-analytic review of the video-game research literature. Their findings show 20 independent tests expressing the link between video-game violence and aggressive cognition. The tests included 1495 participants and yielded a positive and significant average effect. The majority of the studies was experimental and showed a causal relationship between exposure to violent video games and aggressive cognition. The researchers concluded that, “violent video games may increase aggression in the short term by increasing aggressive thoughts” (p. 358). Anderson and Bushman (2001) also identified 17 independent tests analyzing the link between video-game violence and aggressive affect. The tests included 1151 participants and an average effect size that was positive and

significant. The researchers conclude that, “violent video games may also increase aggression by increasing feelings of anger or hostility” (p. 358).

Although these studies are relevant, Newman et al. (2004), state that problems with the violent media research literature include the following:

It is difficult, however, to sort out whether exposure leads to violence or kids who are already prone to violent behavior select this kind of media material. Randomized experiments—which avoid this “selection” problem—show that young children exposed to violent television engage in more violent play afterward than children in a control group. To our knowledge, no similar experiments have been performed with adolescents, whose maturity might lead them to be more sophisticated consumers of media violence. In addition, there is little evidence on the cumulative effects of consuming violent media over time. (p. 70).

In Newman et al.’s (2004) research, their interviews with children resulted in students stating they were not easily influenced by violent media. In relation to the researchers’ case studies they found that Michael Carneal’s, rampage school shooter in West Paducah, Kentucky, use of violent media was frequent in video games and bloody movies; yet, when interviewed, Carneal stated the tragic event in which he participated was not influenced by violent media and was angry at people for attempting to make such a connection. Newman et al.’s (2004) case studies also explained that Mitchell Johnson, involved in the rampage school shooting near Jonesboro, Arkansas, played violent video games that included shooting with others; however, because of his family’s economic situation, he did not have video games at his home. During testimony in front of the Senate Commerce Committee, a Westside Middle School teacher (near Jonesboro, AR) stated that Johnson listened to violent music consistently throughout school. A friend of Johnson stated that Johnson often spoke of blood and gore and bloody movies; however, Johnson’s mother explained that violent music and video games were not his predominant listening and playing alternatives; in her words, Johnson had, “six barbershop

quartet tapes and all his gospel tapes ... [but only] two rap tapes ... [he] loved music, just the different sounds” (p. 72).

Ferguson (2008) examined video game studies or research over a decade; he argues that “no significant relationship between violent video game exposure and school shooting incidents has been demonstrated in the existing scientific literature” and that research has been mixed and at times questionable and/or faulty (p. 25). Experimental studies that have been completed have shown minor correlations, but generalizing such a study to real world acts is problematic. Correlational research has also been mixed, but more importantly many correlational studies fall short by not considering confounding third variables such as personality, family violence, or genetics. The few studies that take into account third variables generate weak correlations. Ferguson (2008) also found significant flaws in the meta-analytic results that found a significant link between violent games and aggression. He found fault in the “unstandardized, unreliable aggression measures, as well as publication bias” (p. 27). All in all, according to Ferguson, no causal or correlational relationship has been illustrated through literature between violent games and aggression. Several other researchers have concluded this as well, including Sherry (2007) in her article ‘Violent video games and aggression: Why can’t we find links’; Savage’s (2008) meta-analysis study entitled, ‘The effects of media exposure on criminal aggression: A meta-analysis’; and Byron’s (2008) ‘Safer children in a digital world: The report of the Byron review.’

Bullying. The third factor of cultural/sociological theories is bullying. Nansel et al. (2001) with the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development completed an extensive study measuring the prevalence of bullying among youths in the United States. The researchers surveyed 15,686 students from grades 6 to 10 in the spring of 1998. They found that nearly 30% of students reported involvement in bullying (13% as the bully, 10.6% as victim, and

6.3% both). This statistic seems evident during the 1997–1998 rampage school shootings. For example, Michael Carneal, who completed the rampage school shooting in Kentucky during the 1997–1998 academic years was asked by a policeman why he committed such a heinous crime, Carneal told the policeman that his classmates were picking on him. Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden, rampage school shooters near Jonesboro, Arkansas during the 1997–98 academic year, explained that they were often harassed; although, their classmates stated that Johnson and Golden were also bullies. Carneal, Johnson, and Golden were described by their classmates as bullies (Newman et al., 2004). Similarly, Eric Harris and Dylan Klebold, rampage school shooters in Colorado in 1999, were also described as bullies; although they had incidents of being picked on as well (Langman, 2009).

In 1999, two agencies—the U.S. Secret Service and the U.S. Department of Education—worked together to create the Safe School Initiative; the initiative examined school shootings that had occurred in the United States. Vossekuil, Fein, Reddy, Borum, and Modzeleski (2002), authors of the report, detailed the findings of the initiative, after carefully reviewing the case histories of 37 events of school violence, and formulated 10 key findings. One of those key findings was that many shooters were bullied and some to the point of torment or unlawful harassment; the authors recommend that it is important to reduce bullying in schools; however, bullying is not a factor in every incident of school violence and not every child who is bullied presents a risk of school violence.

Copycat effect. The fourth factor of cultural/sociological theories is the social psychological notion of imitation or the copycat effect. Sullivan and Guerrett (2003) completed an extensive case study of the 1999 school shooting in Rockdale County, Georgia committed by Anthony B. Solomon, Jr. After completing extensive interviews and reviewing archival

documents, the researchers found clear evidence that Solomon was highly influenced by the rampage school shooting at Columbine in Colorado a month earlier. For instance, Solomon wrote, while in detention prior to court hearings, "... I had just gotten the idea from the shooting at Columbine High School on April 20" (pp. 50–51). Newman et al. (2004) also found similar results and suggested that there is evidence of shooter influence based on the closeness and clustering of school shootings, but the researchers are cautious by acknowledging that not all rampage school shootings are inspired by previous rampage school shootings. For instance, there was a school shooting that took place in Pearl, Mississippi not too long before Michael Carneal's shooting in Kentucky; however, there is no evidence to prove that he was influenced by any such events before committing his act of terror. Research findings completed before the 1990s' rampage school shootings are mixed. Stack (1989) completed an in-depth study covering over two decades of data from television news stories addressing suicides, mass-murder-suicides as well as homicides in comparison with the rate of suicides during the timing of the news feeds. The study, the first to investigate the impact of mass murder on deadly aggression, found some support for a link between publicized stories and aggression; however, the researchers indicated that more research is needed to flesh out the imitation effect.

Masculine identity. The fifth cultural factor is masculine identity. Kimmel and Mahler (2003) examined the literature of rampage school shootings and argue that adolescent masculinity is a serious factor in understanding rampage school shooters. The researchers analyzed secondary media outlets covering rampage school shootings between 1981 and 2001. They found a pattern; almost all of the shooters had been teased or bullied and what the authors call "gay-baited" (p. 1445). The authors suggested that "gay-baited" does not refer to students being gay, but adolescent males teasing other males because they are or act different. Those

differences include students being, “shy, bookish, honor students, artistic, musical, theatrical, nonathletic, ‘geekish’, or weird” (p. 1445); the authors state that students who fit such criteria have fallen short of a code of masculinity in the eyes of their peers. Langman (2009), in his research, found that the shooters had “fragile male identities” (p. 147). Langman gives examples for each shooter; for instance, he states that Mitchell Johnson, rampage school shooter near Jonesboro, AR, was insecure about his masculinity because of his small frame or body and from being abused sexually; Andrew Golden, Mitchell Johnson’s accomplice, had a bodily frame that kept him from playing basketball and football; Golden attempted to make up for his size with guns to establish a masculine identity.

Newman et al. (2004) completed interviews with students in communities in which a rampage school shooting had taken place. They asked students which of the statements would fair worst socially: gay, poor, not white, not religious, or overweight and unattractive (p. 145). In Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden’s community the answer was overwhelmingly gay; students also responded that “gays violated traditional standards of what it means to be masculine” (p. 145); the term gay has been used for any form of social or athletic shortcoming. Michael Carneal, rampage school shooter of the West Paducah, Kentucky community, was called gay by his classmates and Michael considered it torturous. He informed his psychologists that the main reason for his poor grades was because of being teased and called gay; he stated he felt more comfortable around girls because he did not have to “compete to demonstrate his masculinity” (p. 146). According to the researchers, rampage school shooters from their case studies all saw themselves as “failing at manhood” (p. 143). Langman (2009) agrees with Newman et al. (2004) and Kimmel and Mahler (2003) that issues of manhood were a crucial

factor among school shooters; however, the researchers have concluded that hostile feelings “do not always make kids killers” (Langman, 2009, p. 151).

Risk factors. The last explanation or theory for understanding rampage shootings that at one time gained traction among researchers is the risk factor approach, which has led to the preventive threat assessment approach. According to Farrington (2000), the risk factor paradigm, an extension of the criminal career paradigm, was initially modeled from a public health approach. Researchers examined students’ health choices, which led to prevention programs that proved effective in minimizing students’ risk of unhealthy behavior. For instance, Elder et al. (1988) completed a study that included 438 students from various ethnic backgrounds. Students reported their tobacco use or non-tobacco use and other pertinent variables or factors. Findings showed that certain factors supported predictive behavior toward tobacco use. This research was in line with other similar studies. Researchers concluded that addressing such factors or at-risk behavior in prevention programs would aid in reducing the use of tobacco. Hawkins et al. (1992), after reviewing research regarding communities who had success in creating preventive programs that work, summed up the concept this way,

The more risk factors to which an individual is exposed, the greater the likelihood that the individual will become involved in drug and alcohol abuse. If we can reduce or counter these risk factors in young people’s lives, we have a good chance of preventing drug abuse. (p. 9).

This concept carried over into the justice system. Blumstein and the U.S. National Research Council (1986) reviewed the research literature attempting to define prediction rules in anticipating future criminal offences similar to the preventive health model; Blumstein et al. eventually developed two volumes of reports analyzing previous studies, methodology, and models used to predict future criminal behavior. The researchers concluded that prediction scales or a criminal career paradigm is warranted, but much more research is needed. Indeed, in the

1990s, few researchers attempted to add to the literature of Blumstein et al.; a couple of researchers, Farrington and Hawkins (1991), studied specific factors such as unemployment and heavy drinking to find predictors of criminality among youth under 21; although they found some significant findings, Farrington would later state, “it is difficult to decide if any given risk factor is an indicator (symptom) or a possible cause of offending” (Farrington, 1997, p. 383). Regarding profiling school shooters, researchers would find agreement with Farrington.

Threat assessment. O’Toole and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (1999) found that risk factors, alone, in relation to predicting school shooters are not effective; O’Toole et al. go beyond the notion of risk factors in predicting a school shooter to a threat assessment procedure to make up for its lack of predictive behavior. In fact, the researchers indicate that attempting to predict such a violent perpetrator is dangerous and extremely difficult. According to O’Toole et al. (1999), the concepts and principles created by the FBI’s National Center for the Analysis of Violent Crime (NCAVC) regarding threat assessment procedures in respect to potential school shooters is based on 25 years of experience in threat assessment and a thorough analysis of 18 school shooting cases. The report indicates that an all-in-one profile or checklist of danger signs for potential school shooters does not exist. The researchers formulated a threat assessment framework that assesses the potential lethality of an already posed threat from a student by assessing the student’s personality, family dynamics, school dynamics, social dynamics, and the student’s role in the stated dynamics.

Verlinden et al. (2000) conducted a study to find “commonalities” among youth violence, aggression, and school shootings. Based on their literature research, studies show that the infrequent and idiosyncratic characteristics of rampage school shootings creates a challenge in developing shared “common correlates and predictors” of youth violent crimes (p. 5). Different

from previous researchers such as Farrington (1997), who attempted to find specific factors or single variables to aid in predicting youth violence with limited success, Cairns and Cairns (1994) proposed synthesizing research on developmental changes in an individual as well as the social and physical context in which the person lives. In this developmental holistic approach, the researchers not only examined risks such as “violence, deviant social groups, school dropout, suicide, threats to self-esteem, and substance abuse,” (p. 6) but they also countered these risks by examining lifelines (something that can potentially change an individual’s path from at-risk behavior) such as “schools and mentors, social networks and friendships, families and neighborhoods, ethnicity and social class, individual characteristics, and new opportunities for living” (p. 258).

Verlinden et al. (2000) viewed Cairn and Cairn’s developmental approach as an “interactional model of causation that reflects a complex interplay of individual, social, and contextual variables in the etiology of violent behavior” (p. 6). The researchers found the lifelines or categories useful in analyzing to what degree such categorical factors might influence a person in respect to violent behavior. The researchers analyzed nine case studies of school shootings by way of the following factors: Individual factors, family factors, school and peer factors, societal and environmental factors, as well as situational factors and attack-related behaviors.

Some of the researchers’ findings include the following: The most common findings among individual factors across case studies included “uncontrolled anger, depression, blaming others for problems, threatening violence, and having a detailed plan” (p. 42). For family factors, most assailants had “lack of parental supervision and troubled family relationships” (p. 44). In relation to school and peer factors, the shooters were typically isolated and shunned by their

peers. As far as societal and environmental factors, firearms were easily accessible to all shooters and the shooters were noticeably overly interested in guns and explosives. In regard to situational factors and attack-related behaviors, all shooters informed others of their dangerous plans, but were not taken seriously; their violent intentions were also well-planned (pp. 44–45).

The researchers compared their results with various risk assessments and/or warning signs, including but not limited to, ones developed by the National School Safety Center, the American Psychological Association, the FBI, the Department of Education, and the National Association of School Psychologists. The authors recognized that the “set of characteristics compiled by the FBI is the only list that was derived strictly from the study of multi-victim school assaults” (p. 23), and noticed that “all factors on the list compiled by the FBI were seen in almost all of the cases” (p. 45). Verlinden et al.’s (2000) research led them to agree with the FBI’s NCAVC division, who have stated it is not probable to predict a school rampage shooter based on a set of characteristics (O’Toole et al., 1999). Verlinden et al. (2000) go further by stating the risk assessment methods of profiling, interview formats, and threat assessment approach offer some assistance, but there are “no data at this point to assist a clinician in selecting the ‘best’ strategy for risk assessment for violent school assaults” (p. 27).

In conclusion, the authors noted that the most promising approach for assessing the risk of lethal school violence is to use various sources of input that address factors such as “individual factors, family characteristics, school and peer factors, societal and environmental variables, situational factors, and attack-related behaviors” (p. 49).

Newman et al. (2004), from their research, promote a similar “combination of factors” that produces the likelihood of a violent rampage shooting (p. 229). Their conclusions are based on their studies at Heath High School (West Paducah, Kentucky) and Westside Middle School

(near Jonesboro, AR); their approach combines factors from the “individual, community, and national levels, providing a more realistic understanding of how each one contributes to these explosions of rage” (p. 220). The factors include the assailant’s perception of himself as not important to the people who matter to him, having psychosocial problems that increase his feelings of insecurity, unhealthy cultural scripts that provide ineffective examples for solving problems, failure of systems in place to identify such troubled youth, and easy access to firearms. The researchers admit that this “constellation theory” is insufficient in identifying an actual shooter, but they claim that “eliminating any one of the factors will reduce the chances of another rampage” (p. 231).

The Salem–Keizer System approach takes into account Newman et al.’s (2004) constellation theory as well as much of the prominent research and recommendations regarding risk factors and threat assessment in respect to school rampage shootings. The research includes Verlinden et al.’s (2000) notion of an interactional holistic approach, O’Toole et al. (1999) and NCAVC’s “Four-Pronged Assessment Approach” (personality traits and behaviors, family dynamics, school dynamics, and social dynamics) and focus on communication of level of threat, recommendations from the 2002 Safe School Initiative (developed by the U.S. Secret Service in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Education) as well as recommendations from the FBI Behavioral Analysis Unit (Dreal, 2011).

According to Dreal (2011), the Salem–Keizer System or Student Threat Assessment System (STAS) is a package of assessment and safeguard procedures directed and implemented by specific teams that include “schools, law enforcement, public mental health, and juvenile justice services” (p. 4). It aims to “prevent and defuse” violent emotional and physical behavior (threats) of persons in schools and the community. Threats are considered occurrences that

appear at risk of an aggressive outcome. The collaborative team assesses problematic situations for factors that encourage the potential for aggression. Once factors are identified, they are examined through a management process that includes additional “protective factors, increased supervision, and the introduction of intervention to decrease aggravating elements within the school, home, and community” (p. 5). The STAS program collects various views of a diverse school team to complete a Level 1 Threat Assessment. If more assessment is warranted, the case moves to a community-based multiagency team that performs a Level 2 assessment. The collaborative program assesses the level of risk a particular situation presents in respect to one or more students; this approach is different from a risk factor approach that profiles students who possess characteristics that may predict future aggressive behavior, instead STAS focuses on the “situation”. Decision-making and supervision efforts result from assessing “indications of risk, the escalation of that risk, and the protective supports and strategies needed to decrease the risk” (p. 5).

The STAS program, a promising program, according to Dreal (2011) has been difficult to measure in its effectiveness. The author cites the opinions of administrators based on a study given by the University of Oregon’s Institute on Violence and Destructive Behavior. The administrators state that the system is effective; yet the author admits, “It is impossible to measure events that have not occurred as a result of the student threat assessment” (p. 143).

Although researchers have concluded that risk factors are not sole predictors of school rampage shooters, the multilevel threat assessment approach appears to be the most promising. From risk factors to a threat assessment approach, studies have gone from attempting to understand youth intentions to efforts to prevent such tragic behavior.

Prevention Measures: Legislative and School Policies

STAS is a promising preventive strategy; however, according to Dreal (2011) it is “not a complete violence prevention strategy” (p. 9), and before such ideas as the Salem–Keizer STAS approach and the FBI threat assessment approach, policy makers and school officials had already begun to create and enforce preventive measures, but school shootings still persist.

In the early 1990s, based on the concerns of gun violence on the campuses of schools throughout the United States and the devastating effects of such violence on school children, a panel of professionals and legislatures overwhelmingly supported a proposal for a Gun-Free School Zones Act (Congress 1990). The Act prohibits individuals from intentionally discharging, attempting to discharge and/or possessing, “a firearm that has moved in or that otherwise affects interstate or foreign commerce at a place that the individual knows, or has reasonable cause to believe, is a school zone” (Unlawful Acts, 18 U.S.C. § 922, 2011, p. 213).

Gun Free Acts and Zero-tolerance Policies

In 1994, the Gun-Free School Zones Act was passed by the U.S. Congress. The act was an amendment to the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). ESEA focused on student behavior in regard to gun possession on school campuses. The act required all states that benefited from federal monies by way of the ESEA to expel for at least a year any pupil who brought a firearm onto school grounds; expulsions may be modified by school officials on a case-by-case basis (Fox & Burstein, 2010).

The Gun-Free Acts, especially the Gun-Free School Zones Act emboldened school administrators and leaders to implement zero-tolerance policies concerning firearms’ possession and usage (Skiba & Peterson, 1999). After the 1996–97 academic years, the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) was mandated by the U.S. Congress to gather data on the frequent

and grave incidents of violence in public schools; thus, the Principal/School Disciplinarian Survey was commissioned by the NCES. The survey sampled 1,234 public schools. The results indicated that most public schools reported having zero-tolerance policies toward student offenses regarding violence, tobacco, alcohol, drugs, weapons other than firearms, and firearms (Heaviside et al., 1998). After the 1997–98 academic years, Skiba and Peterson (1999) completed a review of school situations that led to suspension or expulsion reported in the national news. The researchers found that “increasingly broad interpretations of zero tolerance have resulted in a near epidemic of suspensions and expulsions for seemingly trivial events” (p. 374). For example, according to Newman et al. (2004) who completed research near Jonesboro, AR, at the site of the 1998 rampage school shooting, a five-year-old student, in Jonesboro, AR, aimed a chicken finger toward another child and said, “Bang, bang, you’re dead”; the student was suspended and his guardians were called to the school for a meeting (p. 285). The incident was played repeatedly in the news (Newman et al., 2004). Such examples proved that despite the flexibility written into the Gun-Free School Zones Act to consider case-by-case situations, many school administrators informed students that “infractions involving weapons or the threat of serious harm would result in suspension or expulsion, no matter what the mitigating circumstances” (Fox & Burstein, 2010, p. 107).

As more information became known about the use of zero-tolerance policies in the schools, researchers began questioning its effectiveness. For instance, according to the NCES’ study, 79% of principals claimed to have implemented zero-tolerance policies because of violence. Schools that claimed to have no crime were less likely to have a zero-tolerance policy for violence (74%) than schools that claimed to have serious crimes (85%) (Heaviside et al., 1998). Researchers Skiba and Peterson (1999) interpreted these data to mean, “The NCES found

that schools that use zero-tolerance policies are still less safe than those without such policies” (p. 376). Newman et al.’s (2004) research at Westside, near Jonesboro, AR, made clear that teachers were apprehensive of their zero-tolerance policies because such policies deterred students from warning teachers of possible threats. The combination of the NCES research, review of the literature, and Newman et al.’s research, led Newman et al. (2004) to conclude that “on the whole, zero-tolerance policies are too inflexible and should be avoided” (p. 288). In 2008, the American Psychological Association published their task force’s finding of a 20-year review of the literature and research regarding zero-tolerance policies in the public schools. The task force concluded, “That the overwhelming majority of findings from the available research on zero tolerance and exclusionary discipline ... [has not] provided evidence that such approaches can guarantee safe and productive school climates ... for students” (Skiba 2008, p. 857).

Building Low Level Security Measures

Zero-tolerance policies were not the only preventive measures implemented by school officials as a result of violence in schools. s et al.’s (2004) research on the site of Heath High School (West Paducah, Kentucky) and Westside Middle School (near Jonesboro, AR) revealed immediate adjustments after the rampage school shootings at each particular school. For instance, on the day of the shooting and continuing, Heath stationed teachers at the school entrances each morning to assess student’s materials for weapons and officials were posted at the entrance to request identification for individuals entering the building; students were mandated to keep their backpacks in their lockers after entering the building, and each student was required to wear an identification label. There were fences built around both campuses, and both schools were closed to outside visitors. Teachers and skeptics considered the changes, “a knee-jerk

response to demands that the schools ‘do something’” (p. 277). However, according to Newman et al. (2004), much thought was entertained before implementing changes for short-term and long-term issues in both schools. All in all, the researchers state that the two schools have much to teach other schools facing rampage school shootings.

In fact, based on the NCES data, most schools reported that they also began using low levels of security measures for preventive purposes (Heaviside et al., 1998). From the 2009 NCES data, between the 1999–2000 academic years and the 2007–2008 academic years, there was an increase in the percentage of public schools claiming to utilize the following security measures for safety:

controlled access to the building during school hours (from 75 to 90 percent); controlled access to school grounds during school hours (from 34 to 43 percent); required to wear badges or picture IDs (from 4 to 8 percent); faculty required to wear badges or picture IDs (from 25 to 58 percent); the use of one or more security cameras to monitor school (from 19 to 55 percent); the provision of telephones in most classrooms (from 45 to 72 percent); and the requirement that students wear uniforms (from 12 to 18 percent). Between the 2003–04 and 2007–08 school years, there was an increase in the percentage of schools reporting the drug testing of student athletes (from 4 to 6 percent) as well as an increase in the percentage of schools reporting the drug testing of students in other extracurricular activities (from 3 to 4 percent). (Dinkes et al. 2009, p. 68).

According to Langman’s research (2009), these measures (including the installation of metal detectors) do not prevent school rampage shootings. Langman makes clear the point that rampage school shootings of the ‘90s were committed by students at their own schools; therefore, identification badges would not have been relevant. In addition, security cameras would not have stopped such terrible acts because the shooters were not attempting to act in secret. Furthermore, shooters who were expecting to die were not concerned with metal detectors or setting off the metal detector alarms.

Langman gives examples such as the shooting at Columbine and at Red Lake, Minnesota; in both cases there were cameras. In addition, at Red Lake, there were metal detectors, but it did

not stop the shooter from walking into the building with firearms and shooting security personnel at the entrance; Langman concludes by stating, “by the time shooters are approaching the school with a gun, it is too late” (p. 188).

School Resource Officers

According to Newman et al.’s (2004) research at Heath High School (West Paducah, Kentucky), a Heath teacher stated, “An ID badge and a fence won’t stop a potential shooter, but a security officer might” (p. 281). After the 97–98 horrific rampage school shooting events, President Bill Clinton strongly urged the use of School Resource Officers (SROs); in 1999, encouraged by the Clinton White House, the U.S. Department of Justice established the “COPS in Schools” program as a section of the Office of Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) (Fox & Burstein, 2010). During the years 1999 and 2005, the “COPS in Schools” program funded nearly \$724 million for the hiring of SROs. In 2011, the “COPS Hiring Program” assisted entities in hiring officers to handle specific problem situations, which include school-based policing (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services, 2014).

In 2002, the National Association of School Resource Officers (school-based police officers (NASRO)), conducted a 52-item survey of its members in attendance at the Association’s yearly conference. The questionnaire addresses the SROs’ perceptions on school safety and security. 658 questionnaires were completed. Key findings from the survey include the following: 95% of SROs consider their schools susceptible to a terrorist act; 79% think schools within their districts are unprepared to respond properly to a terrorist attack; the majority of SROs indicate that there are major gaps in school security and school crisis plans are inadequate and untested; a majority state that they are in need of more training and more support

from outside agencies; and most report that school personnel have no training in terrorism due to a lack of funding (Trump, 2002).

According to the Office of Community Oriented Police Service (2014), in response to SROs concerns regarding their role in school safety, in 2013, the COPS office established the Integrated School Resource Officer Model and Training Curriculum project; the initiative is expected to “expand the knowledge base for SROs and those who select, hire, train, and manage them” (p. 5).

Unfortunately, previous school shootings seem to support the need for more training for SROs and the fact that the presence of SROs does not necessarily stop school shootings. For instance, in the 1999 tragic school shooting at Columbine, there was an SRO present at the time of the shooting. The armed officer was unable to protect the entire school population of 1,900 students (Fox & Burstein, 2010). In Sparks, Nevada, the Washoe school district has SROs at each high school, and has one officer in charge of patrolling five schools in the Sparks Middle School vicinity. Nevertheless, despite millions of dollars’ worth of security fencing, hundreds of hours of training, and the presence of SROs, on October 21st, 2013, a 12-year-old middle school student went on a rampage school shooting at Sparks Middle School, murdering a teacher and injuring classmates before taking his own life (Bellisle, 2013).

Fox and Burstein (2010) take into consideration the research regarding policies and security measures. The research states that the continual attention to such measures “indicates very clearly that the concern for school safety is hardly temporary or transitory” (p. 135), and ongoing research is needed to evaluate safety practices and preventive initiatives (Borum et al., 2010). While preventive policies, security measures, and preventive threat assessment

approaches may enhance school safety overall, it is a mistake to perceive them as an “infallible safeguard against criminal activity” in public schools (Fox & Burstein 2010, p. 136).

Responding: Post-School Shooting Plans

In the 1990s, there was a historic series of rampage school shootings; among the series were the shootings that took place at Heath High School (West Paducah, Kentucky) and Westside Middle School (near Jonesboro, AR). Based on Newman et al.’s (2004) research, school officials at each school did not have a contingency plan to assist them in responding to the tragedy; the researchers also found that the other schools within the series did not have a response plan; much can be learned from their experiences. School leaders who have experienced such tragedies, including media specialists and law enforcement agencies, have dedicated themselves to assist others. The FBI has assisted by holding conferences of “community leaders from Heath and Westside, Pearl, Mississippi, Eugene, Oregon, and Bethel, Alaska among others, to discuss school responses and community reactions” (p. 273). Because of such efforts, it is possible to learn valuable lessons in dealing with rampage school shootings.

Practical Information on Crisis Planning

Not much research existed on how school officials should respond to rampage school shootings before, nor for years after, the series of rampage shootings of the 90s; thus, based on several interviews, panels of experts, and research on crisis management across various settings, the U.S. Department of Education (2007) published the Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities to assist schools in developing a post-shooting crisis plan. Crisis is defined by the authors as “a situation where schools could be faced with inadequate information, not enough time, and insufficient resources, but in which leaders must make one or many crucial decisions” (pp. 1–5). Despite the crisis situation, based on crisis literature and

interviews, the report purports that experts employ four phases in managing a crisis: Mitigation/Prevention (ability to reduce or eliminate harmful risks), Preparedness (preparation for the worst-case situation), Response (directions undertaken during a crisis), and Recovery (restore area to some normalcy after a crisis). Although a flexible framework, each phase has suggestions for school officials when determining what type of information to include in a school crisis plan; for instance, for Mitigation, the authors have school leaders consider developing access control procedures and requiring IDs for pupils and staff. For Prevention, the authors support the use of the *Threat assessments in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates* document created by the U.S. Department of Education and U.S. Secret Service.

The *Threat assessments in schools: A guide to managing threatening situations and to creating safe school climates* document advocates six principles to follow as the basis of the threat assessment process: targeted violence is the end product of a process of contemplating and behavior; targeted violence centers around the interaction between the person, the circumstance, the setting, and the intended victim; for threat assessment to work, assessors must possess an investigative, skeptical, and inquisitive mental state; for threat assessment to work, decisions are based on facts rather than risk characteristics; for threat assessment to work, the process is guided by an integrated systems approach; the primary question that guides such an investigation is “whether a student poses a threat, not whether the student has made a threat” (Fein et al., 2004, p. 29).

The Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities report also gives action steps for the Preparedness phase, which include: identify and involve stakeholders, consider existing efforts, determine what crisis the plan will address, define roles

and responsibilities, develop methods for communicating (staff, students, families, media), obtain necessary equipment and supplies, prepare for immediate response, create maps and facilities information, develop accountability and student release procedures, practice, and address liability issues (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities report gives action steps for the Response phase, which include: expect to be surprised, assess the situation and choose the appropriate response, respond within seconds, notify appropriate emergency responders and the school crisis response team, evacuate or lock down the school as appropriate, triage injuries and provide emergency first aid to those who need it, keep supplies nearby and organized at all times, trust leadership, communicate accurate and appropriate information, activate the student release system, allow for flexibility in implementing the crisis plan, and documentation (U.S. Department of Education 2007).

The Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities report gives action steps for the Recovery phase, which include: plan for recovery in the preparedness phase, assemble the Crisis Intervention Team, return to the “business of learning” as quickly as possible, schools and districts need to keep stakeholders informed (students, families, and the media), focus on the building and people during recovery, provide assessment of emotional needs (staff, students, families, and responders), provide stress management during class time, conduct daily debriefings (staff, responders, and others assisting in recovery), take as much time as needed for recovery, remember anniversaries of crises, and evaluate (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

The authors of the Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities, make clear that the guide is not a cookie-cutter approach, but a model to follow

that includes critical concepts and aspects of crisis planning. Leaders should make decisions keeping in mind local and state laws and tailoring their plans to the needs of their community (U.S. Department of Education, 2007).

Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence

In 2012, the U.S. Department of Justice, Bureau of Justice, Assistance, and the International Association of Chiefs of Police published the Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence: Second Edition. The intent of the report is to present various strategies and methods for school leaders to consider when developing safety plans. The document provides guidance regarding school violence prevention and response in the following areas: ways to prevent student violence, threat assessment, planning and training for what to do during an actual crisis, how to respond during a crisis, how to handle the aftermath of a crisis, legal considerations, and recommendations for the media. It also offers guidance on the roles of school administrators, teachers, staff, students, parents, law enforcement, and community members.

The authors caution that suggestions contained in the document are not appropriate for every school; they suggest that planning committees “delete, revise, and add to recommendations in the document as needed to address their unique needs and circumstances” (p. 3). For instance, the report includes the U.S. Secret Service threat assessment suggestions of investigation purposes. The threat assessment was developed by the U.S. Secret Service’s National Threat Assessment Center mainly for stopping the assassination of public officials; therefore, they “may not be applicable to all school situations” (p. 18).

Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans

In March of 2011, President Barack Obama issued a presidential directive (PPD-8). The directive instructed the Homeland Security and Counterterrorism department to coordinate with

other agencies the development of the national preparedness goal and national preparedness system for the nation's safety. The national preparedness goal informs the risk of certain threats and weaknesses of the nation, defines the central capabilities needed to prepare for events that present the greatest risk to the security of the nation, and reflects the policy direction of previous policies. The national preparedness system is a mixture of guidance, programs, and processes that make it possible for the country to meet its national preparedness goal; it includes a set of collaborative national planning frameworks, addressing "prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery" (p. 3); it includes an interagency operational plan, resource and guidance, recommendations and directions in supporting preparedness planning for national entities, communities, families, and persons; furthermore, it includes a comprehensive approach to assess national preparedness (Obama et al., 2011).

In 2013, the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Office of State and Healthy Students published the Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans. The guide was created as a response to President Barack Obama's call for model emergency management plans for schools; thus the guide is "aligned with the emergency planning practices at the national, state, and local levels" (p. 2) and it is informed by the Presidential Policy Directive (PPD) 8. The directive is symbolic of the "evolution in our collective understanding of national preparedness, based on the lessons learned from terrorist attacks, hurricanes, school incidents, and other experiences" (p. 2). The Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans is expected to take the place of the 2007 Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities. The authors of the Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans kept certain ideas from the previous document, such as following the five mission areas (advocated by

President Obama in his directive): prevention, protection, mitigation, response, and recovery. However, because these areas are typically in sync with the timeframe of “before, during, and after”, the authors used the terms “before, during, and after” throughout the guide, advising the reader to think of prevention, protection, and mitigation activities as positioned in the time frame of “before”, response activities within the timeframe of “during”, and recovery activities with the timeframe of beginning in “during” and continuing “after” an incident (p. 2). The guide is organized into four parts: the principles of schools’ emergency management planning, a process for developing, implementing, and continually refining a school’s Emergency Operations Plan (EOP) with community partners at the school building level, a discussion of the form, function, and content of school EOPs, and a closer look at key topics that support school emergency planning, including addressing an active shooter, school climate, psychological first aid, and information-sharing (p. 1).

Because emergency plans that take into consideration school shootings are relatively new concepts (and school rampage shootings overall are rare occurrences), not much empirical research has been done on their effectiveness for school rampage shootings. Borum et al.’s (2010) conclusion of the review of the literature is that there is a “paucity of empirical evidence to guide school administrators in developing emergency preparedness and crisis response plans for school shootings” (p. 34); thus, school officials have become reliant on the insight from emergency operation plans, typically utilized in “workplace settings and lessons learned in the aftermath of school shootings and other traumatic events” (p. 34).

Counselors

Within Chapter II, there has been an in-depth discussion of understanding rampage school shooters (profiles and theories), prevention measures (legislative and school policies),

lessons learned, and post-school shooting plans. Each section is crucial to the subject of rampage school shootings; one particular group of professionals has a unique role associated with each topic: school counselors.

In terms of understanding students and their psychological needs, school counselors are often the first line of assistance for students with personal problems and/or mental health struggles. According to the American School Counselor Association's (ASCA) National Model: A Framework for School Counseling Programs (2012), school counselors do not offer therapy or extended counseling in schools to address mental disorders; however, they are "prepared to recognize and respond to student mental health crises and needs and to address these barriers to student success by offering education, prevention, and crisis and short-term intervention until the student is connected with available community resources" (p. 86). To elaborate further, school counselors offer help to students as they are going through critical and emergency events. They provide interventions, follow up to immediate needs, and prevent circumstances from becoming more severe. According to ASCA's official position in The Professional School Counselor and Safe Schools and Crisis Response statement (2013), professional school counselors engage in important practices that are crucial in preventing crisis and response preparation of school crisis:

- individual and group counseling
- advocacy for student safety
- interventions for students at risk of dropping out or harming self or others
- peer mediation training, conflict resolution programs and anti-bullying programs
- support of student-initiated programs such as Students Against Violence Everywhere
- family, faculty, and staff education programs
- facilitation of open communication between students and caring adults

- defusing critical incidents and providing related stress debriefing
- district and school response team planning and practices
- partnering with community resources (p. 43)

In summary, ASCA's position statement states, "through the implementation of a comprehensive school counseling program, professional school counselors are a vital resource in preventing, intervening, and responding to crisis situations" (p. 43).

Although ASCA has made clear that school counselors are an important asset in dealing with crisis situations such as a rampage school shooting, not much research has been done to validate their importance and give school counselors a realistic idea of how their skills translate during a hostage situation (Daniels et al., 2007).

Research of School Counselors: Lessons Learned

A Case Study: Taken Hostage

In 2007, Daniels et al. published an article entitled, *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor's response*. The study is one of the few studies that has an intentional focus on a school counselor's lived experience of a school shooting; in fact, the authors' review of the literature led them to state, "there has been no research conducted on the school counselor's response to an armed hostage event" (p. 483). This case involved a student holding hostage his classmates at gunpoint. The student was a 17-year-old White male with a back story of mental illness; the student had received treatment for mental issues, but had ceased taking his medication; his family decided that he should stop seeking treatment. The school counselor was not aware that he was no longer in treatment. The day of the incident, the student walked into a classroom with a loaded firearm and forced individuals to go to the back of the room; afterwards, he requested the principal. The principal and the SRO entered the

classroom and convinced the assailant to release the students and teacher. After negotiating, the attacker gave up his firearm to the SRO. The SRO walked the gun to the police; the 17-year-old adolescent was taken by the police and eventually admitted back in to treatment while serving time at a juvenile center.

The researchers interviewed school officials who were involved in helping to disarm the student. The authors focused the article on the interview with the school counselor. The counselor, a Caucasian female, at the time had five years of experience, but had only worked one year at the site of the hostage situation. She had taken advantage of crisis intervention training within her school district, but had not experienced such a crisis. The researchers employed a qualitative research technique called consensual qualitative analysis in which three researchers independently analyzed the interview data and came together to find consensus on their findings. An auditor was recruited to verify the findings.

The authors categorized the questions that were presented to the school counselor. The questions pertained to the following: “a) specific roles of the school counselor, b) systemic conditions that helped the situation, c) to what the counselor attributed the successful outcome of this situation, and d) advice she has for other professionals” (p. 485).

Regarding the specific roles, half of her answer to the question included some type of *active intervention*; she stated that she, “a) assessed the situation before it happened, via rumors; b) met with students and parents after the event; c) provided resources for students; and d) coordinated efforts of community mental health providers who were brought in” (p. 485). 29% of her answer to the question related to *communicating with other professionals*; they included, “a) contacting the crisis response team from the school district, b) contacting the community mental health center to request assistance, and c) serving as the coordinator of these people who had

been brought in” (p. 485). Other responsibilities taken on by this counselor included having a previous *relationship* with the assailant, and possessing the knowledge that the student was having difficulties with *school conditions*.

In respect to systemic conditions, the counselor spoke most (44% of answer) on *conditions within the school* that provided a safe atmosphere for the student population. One particular mention was her description of faculty and staff patrolling the hallways before and between classes. She also mentions that there were a significant number of securities throughout the school. Another condition included the *relationships* developed between students and faculty, especially with the perpetrator. Other important information shared included the Administration’s connection with the *community* and law enforcement *training*.

As far as attribution of success, the school counselor’s answer was mostly related to *escalation prevention*. For instance, she elaborated on the bravery of the teacher, who stayed calm and did not act in a manner that escalated the gunman; she went further on to mention the even-tempered responses of the principal and the SRO while they negotiated with the assailant. She stated that *relationships* people had with the gunman were crucial in ending the situation as well as effective non-intimidating *communication* as a result of positive relationships with the perpetrator. Another important aspect was the teacher and students’ *compliance* with the gunman’s terms when he initially walked into the classroom.

For advice to other professionals, the school counselor made a couple of statements that stood out from the rest: “develop *relationships* with all students, and be aware of what is happening in the school and take rumors seriously (*school conditions*)” (Daniels et al., 2007, p. 486). The counselor suggested that school officials receive crisis intervention training and caution individuals from acting in ways that may escalate a crisis (*escalation prevention*).

According to the authors, in this situation, the school counselor was actively engaged before the event through meeting with and performing a suicide assessment of the teenager. She was also engaged after the situation, by acting as the main service provider to students and organizing the services of other mental health professionals.

In conclusion, the researchers believe that the most important findings of their research are that “a) school personnel must work to establish trusting relationships with all students; b) school counselors and others of the crisis response team must receive training to actively intervene to resolve hostage incidents and in handling the aftermath; and c) the plan and the team must help to establish the school as a safe, trusting environment” (p. 488).

From School Counselors’ Lived Experiences

In 2001, not too soon after the late 90s rampage school shootings, Fein completed a more extensive study of counselors’ response to school shootings. Fein (2001) completed a dissertation utilizing qualitative research to obtain information on the lived experience of school leaders who have experienced a school shooting. He conducted 22 interviews over four American high schools that were sites of a school shooting. He identified school leaders as leaders who possessed authority via their positions, mainly superintendents and principals. However, as a result of his interviews with school leaders he was led to also interview school officials or leaders without authority via their positions who were integral in the response to the tragedy. These leaders’, without formal authority, “post-shooting role involved district-level decision-making authority not possessed prior to the shooting” (p. 95). One group of leaders who fit this description was counselors; throughout the interviews, leaders mentioned counselors or counselors specifically were interviewed. The research gave some insight to the role of counselors in preventing, responding, and recovering from a rampage school shooting. In fact, it

is clear that counselors served as leaders through their coordinating and organizing, counseling skills and decision-making, working through their own emotions and problems, and providing needed services as an integral resource for others during a tragedy.

As leaders. Two participants explained how their training as counselors catapulted them into leadership roles; in their school areas, a temporary crisis response team was developed with the participants as the leaders. One of these participants informed the interviewer that she had no formal crisis training until the school shooting was over; however, she is a skilled counselor with a military background; while the other participant said she had a wealth of experience responding to crisis situations. She assisted in creating the school's crisis protocol. She exhibited self-awareness and was able to perceive her emotional stance "analytically and dispassionately" (Fein, 2001, p. 143).

Coordinating and organizing. One of the most important jobs of counselors was coordinating counseling services. Counselors determined where and when counseling sessions would take place as well as who could or could not perform counseling and who could counsel with whom. For instance, regarding where counseling would take place, one counselor was in charge of making sure a counselor was sitting on every bus that had student victims. Another coordinator stated, "I had separated the clergy and the counselors. They were [both] in the cafeteria of the school, but not seated together" (Fein, 2001, p. 195). In respect to who would conduct counseling, another counselor who helped organize counseling efforts stated she was careful when assigning counseling duties to new counselors as they appeared to panic; as a result, she matched experienced counselors with inexperienced counselors to assist and protect young counselors.

Counseling skills and decision-making. Counselors not only used basic counseling techniques, but they also used more advanced techniques to assist with counseling services. One counselor stated that her role was “mega-family therapy. I applied system principles from the family and broadened it to the school and to the community at large” (Fein, 2001, p. 220). Counselors also performed counselor follow-up for students after the shootings.

Counselors not only utilized their counseling skills but were careful in their decision-making. One counselor purposely avoided informal counseling attempts with a principal because the principal made it clear that she did not want to expose her emotions; in other words, counselors recognized the need to counsel with caution; another counselor assisted a co-worker by insisting that she not discuss the shooting until she was ready.

Emotional toll. The assistance that counselors provided also helped counselors to debrief the shootings and counselors became aware that debriefing immediately after the shootings would have been helpful for them. For instance, one participant explained that a counselor expressed guilt for not predicting a school rampage shooting because he had a relationship with the shooter and felt that the media was falsely portraying the shooter while leaders in authority positions did not feel guilty (Fein, 2001).

Problems. Although counselors were appreciated, they still faced issues with leaders. One issue was unarticulated boundary issues; more specifically, there were disagreements between superintendents and counselors regarding counselors’ access to students. Counselors wanted to continue to follow up with students even after the immediate aftermath of the tragedies; however, superintendents thought the continued follow ups would only remind students of the tragedies and make it difficult for the students to move on with their lives. Another issue that counselors faced was the fact that counselors were not always listened to; for

example, one counselor shared her opinion with a superintendent that she believed school should not be dismissed the following day; the superintendent dismissed students anyway, because she “didn’t want kids turned out and then find ‘em hurt or dead somewhere, or something like that” (Fein, 2001, p. 191).

Counselors found it difficult to debrief leaders. One leader recognized the importance of crisis counselors debriefing others, and the leader was aware that debriefing would have been beneficial for her, but she was consumed by her responsibilities. Some of the counselors’ debriefing sessions were criticized. There were leaders who viewed the debriefing sessions as intrusive; they were frustrated because the time used to debrief could have been used for other responsibilities. Another leader stated her debriefing was “too elementary” (Fein, 2001, p. 174).

Counselors also had issues with other counselors. Another issue was related to screening outside counselors. School counselors had concerns with clergy-counseling techniques and having time to view qualifications of counselors from other districts and/or agencies.

A resource. All in all, the overall consensus was that school counselors gave much needed “support to the school leaders who guided their districts in the aftermath of a school shooting” (Fein, 2001, p. 169). For instance, one superintendent explained that he was appreciative of counselors validating her role during the crisis. Other leaders stated that counselors were probably counseling them without their knowledge, “Maybe she [counselor] was counseling me and I didn’t know it, but we talked a few times ... That is important to do, because the effect is so profound” (p. 170).

Despite such techniques, the need for counseling services tended to exceed the resources of many schools. A major lesson that came out of this study was that having connections to outside agencies and clergy is a must and that “systems for screening and monitoring counselors

must be in place before major crises occur” (Fein, 2001, p. 238). The need overall for counselors was validated by the state Department of Education. The state Department of Education asked leaders if they were in need of more counselors, and then they attempted to send more counselors to sites.

Fein et al. (2008) detailed more specifically school counselors’ responses to school shootings best in a later article in which he wrote with co-authors based on his 2001 dissertation research. According to Fein et al. (2008), school counselors responded to school shootings in the following ways:

1. School counselors were requested to fulfill responsibilities such as problem-solving safety concerns for students or addressing psychological triage issues after the shooting.
2. During the immediate aftermath of the shootings, some school counselors influenced administration decisions such as determining school closings and school building repair.
3. School counselors accepted administrative responsibilities with limited training or having been assigned a formal role before the shooting.
4. School counselors were emotional, worried over “making mistakes” and “felt alone” and sensed the “weight of leadership” (Fein, 2003, p. 147).
5. School counselors worked beyond their normal duties in the aftermath of school shootings; for instance, school counselors found providing counseling services to a great number of students an overwhelming task in the aftermath of school shootings.
6. School counselors accepted managerial roles and were expected to make numerous decisions uncommon to their normal expectations.

7. There were no plans or guidelines for screening outside counselors' credentials; some outside volunteer counselors did not have experience working with children; some volunteers were not trained professional counselors; some volunteers attempted to influence crisis survivors with their religious ideology.
8. Some school counselors assisted with logistics rather than group or individual counseling during the immediate aftermath of school shootings.
9. School counselors at times had to decide between the aims of the school and the aims of the crisis management team during the immediate aftermath of school shootings.
10. Some school counselors used informal dialogue as a way to counsel unwilling participants.
11. One counselor was assigned to "mitigate the trauma response by allowing victims "to ventilate some of their feelings in a safe environment" (Fein, 2001, p. 143).
12. One counselor utilized "mega-family therapy. I applied system principles from the family and broadened it to the school and to the community at large" (Fein, 2001, p. 220).
13. To assist with stress, school counselors used counseling and debriefing skills that seemed to be a regular conversation to school leaders.
14. One school counselor had difficulty sleeping because of the impact of the crisis.
15. School counselors stated they were impacted by the crisis and aware of the possibility of secondary trauma from working with others who were experiencing traumas.
16. School counselors did not take advantage of counseling services for themselves.
17. School counselors were unaware of the totality of the emotional toll the crisis had on themselves.

18. School counselors, using their skills and background, eventually were able to assess themselves.

Fein et al. (2008) summarized these responses into four themes or lessons integral to school counselors based on his dissertation study: be prepared to lead, serving two organizations creates role conflict (leading a crisis team versus delivering counseling services), employ subtle counseling, and minister to thyself.

A School Counselor's Self-Report

In 1999, Columbine High School, which resides in Jefferson County School District experienced a deadly rampage school shooting. During that time, Austin (2003) served as a school counselor at a separate school in the Jefferson County School District. Although she did not experience the happenings of the shooting as they were taking place, she was involved in the immediate aftermath; more specifically, she “counseled Columbine students, parents, and staff that day and for a week afterwards” (p. 8). After speaking with her district counselor as well as Columbine High School’s school counselors regarding the incident, she wrote about her experience and the lessons learned. She decided to share the major lessons that she learned in a report in regard to school counselors. Those lessons are as follows:

- 1) *Columbine counselors were overloaded.* After the tragedy, Columbine High School slowly began to achieve some return back to normal operations; however, the psychological needs of students and staff were so prevailing that school counselors were unable to balance regular duties such as scheduling and credit problems with the mental health needs of the school. As a result, six additional school counselors, the district counselor, and extra mental health workers were called in to the school to assist.

- 2) *Relationships are key.* According to the head counselor of the school counseling department at Columbine High School, it was beneficial that the counselors already had a good relationship before the tragedy; their relationship fostered much-needed team work and collaboration during and after the crisis. According to the director of student services, the most significant lesson learned from the rampage school shooting was the critical need to work together in meeting the needs of others; to provide a united front, relationships are key.
- 3) *Staff should seek therapy.* The chairperson of the school counseling department at Columbine High School stated that although some staff did receive assistance for mental health needs, others chose not to seek counseling. He stated those who did not take care of themselves mentally and physically over the summer found it difficult to perform their job duties effectively.

All in all, there were three major lessons that Austin (2003) felt were critical: consider the overload of counselors in helping with mental health needs, develop and maintain positive team relationships, and the staff stay mindful of mental and physical health needs.

Researchers recommend post-shooting counseling plans specifically for counselors (Newman et al., 2004). The two studies of school counselors' responses to hostage and rampage school shootings and the school counselor's self-report are important in helping school counselors frame how to respond in school shooting or hostage situations; however, additional research is needed to assist in the understanding and use of prevention and preparation strategies important in the framing of rampage school shooting plans for school counselors.

Need for a Comprehensive Framework for School Counselors

The ASCA adopted a Professional School Counselor and Safe Schools and Crisis Response statement in 2000. They revised the statement in 2007 and 2013. Fein's 2003 and Fein et al.'s 2008 research are cited throughout the statement. For instance, ASCA (2013) cites Fein (2003) in its position that "a crisis or an act of violence thrusts professional school counselors into positions of responsibility to ensure the safety and well-being of all students and staff" (p. 43). ASCA (2013) also uses Fein et al.'s 2008 research as support for asserting that professional school counselors assist with the process of destressing students and faculty and engage in important leadership roles, particularly in the immediate aftermath of a tragedy or violent act; school counselors are trained in crisis response interventions and are significant members of the "school's response team in collaboration with administrators and other school staff members" (p. 43).

ASCA's position statements are important, but they lack specificity of prevention strategies and a response preparedness framework. In regard to prevention, Hermann and Finn (2002) in their review of the ethical and legal literature regarding school counselors, state that school counselors, "have a legal and ethical duty to act reasonably to prevent school violence" (para 24). As a result, the authors strongly urge counselors to stay current on proven violence prevention techniques, assessment skills, and interventions in relation to school violence. ASCA ethical standards (2010) suggest that school counselors "utilize assessment measures within the scope of practice for school counselors and for which they are trained and competent" (p. 3). Thus, training and implementing prevention strategies such as threat assessment procedures are critical for school counselors.

In regard to response preparedness, the ASCA National Model (2012) lists in its delivery section the following competencies:

IV-A-9: School counselors should articulate and demonstrate an understanding of responsive services (counseling and crisis response) including grief and bereavement.

IV-B-3a: An effective school counselor is able to ... list and describe interventions used in responsive services, such as individual/small-group counseling and crisis response.

IV-B-3d: An effective school counselor is able to ... understand what defines a crisis, the appropriate response and a variety of intervention strategies to meet the needs of the individual, group, or school community before, during, and after crisis response.

IV-B-3e: An effective school counselor is able to ... provide team leadership to the school and community in a crisis.

IV-B-3f: An effective school counselor is able to ... involve appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation.

IV-B-3h: An effective school counselor is able to ... understand *the role of the school counselor* and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan. (pp. 156–157).

Although these competencies are clear regarding expectations for an effective counselor, they do not provide guidelines or strategies on how to meet these standards, especially the immediate response to a crisis situation. Chibbaro and Jackson (2006) state that ASCA offers guidelines in a document entitled “Counselor Immediate Response Guide” for emergency situations on its website; however, the website address provided by the authors is no longer available. In addition, the document does not appear when a search is completed on the ASCA website. However, ASCA (n.d.a) does provide a section on its website dealing with the topic of crisis; the webpage includes general guidelines for helping children during a crisis:

- Try and keep routines as normal as possible. Kids gain security from the predictability of routine, including attending school.
- Limit exposure to television and the news.
- Be honest with kids and share with them as much information as they are developmentally able to handle.
- Listen to kids' fears and concerns.
- Reassure kids that the world is a good place to be, but that there are people who do bad things.
- Parents and adults need to first deal with and assess their own responses to crisis and stress.
- Rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships.

Although these guidelines are relevant, they still fall short of a comprehensive framework for school counselors to employ in responding to a crisis. Ironically, crisis response guides continually point to counselors as an integral aspect in the prevention, response, and recovery from a school rampage shooting. For instance, *The Practical Information on Crisis Planning: A Guide for Schools and Communities* (2007) suggests that counselors are not only individuals who share in the responsibility of prevention, but they are expected members of the crisis planning team; counselors are involved in providing interventions, training other school personnel in assessing the emotional needs of children and colleagues, and connecting with community resources. According to the *Guide for Preventing and Responding to School Violence: Second Edition* (2012), schools should provide counseling services for prevention, response and recovery phases in addressing emotional needs such as grief, anger management, depression, and student social development, to name a few. Such services are aligned with

national professional standards, especially in respect to treatment and student-to-counselor ratios. In responding and recovering from a serious violent situation, counselors are expected to provide critical incident stress debriefing for those in need of assistance. More specifically, the authors suggest that school counselors should perform the following:

1. Stay in close contact with the counseling director of the crisis management team.
 2. Be available by canceling other activities.
 3. Obtain the schedule of any seriously injured or deceased students and visit their classes. In addition, visit classes attended by their close friends.
 4. Organize and provide individual and group counseling as needed to students, teachers, and staff.
 5. Contact parents and/or guardians of affected students with suggestions for counseling support and referrals.
 6. Locate counseling assistance throughout the community, including counselors from other nearby schools.
 7. Establish a self-referral procedure. Make referral forms available.
 8. Provide and recommend counseling for the crisis team and emergency response personnel.
 9. Keep records of affected students and provide follow-up services.
 10. Accept other responsibilities as designated by the crisis management team director.
- (p. 28).

According to the Guide for Developing High-Quality School Emergency Operations Plans (U.S. Department of Education et al., 2013), counselors are expected to create positive school climates and continue their education in child development and their knowledge in

responding effectively to different student behaviors to “de-escalate aggressive behavior before it becomes a threat to school safety” (p. 54); in addition, the authors write that after a tragedy, counselors are expected to be readily available to “immediately assist” others, including family members (p. 67).

The importance of school counselors and their services in the immediate response to a crisis are evident. In spite of this, there is an interesting absence in “counselor preparation, certification, supervision, and ethical practice standards of a *consistent* or *comprehensive* guideline for crisis prevention/intervention and post-crisis recovery” (McAdams & Keener, 2008, p. 388). Without a doubt, counselors who are well prepared for a crisis and its aftermath will ultimately make a positive impact on clients after a tragic event and meet the standards and expectations of ASCA. Such conclusions make plain the need for a “consistent and well-informed conceptual framework for client crisis response in counseling” (p. 389).

Theoretical Frameworks

The number of school counselors within a school is typically small compared with the student population. ASCA recommends a ratio of 250 students to 1 school counselor (2012). During a crisis situation such as a rampage school shooting, such a low number of school counselors may not be enough to serve the counseling needs of the school. In 2002, President George W. Bush established the President’s New Freedom Commission on Mental Health (Hogan, 2003). The commission, through research, expert testimonies, and meetings, resulted in several findings in respect to mental health and the nation. One finding indicated that more attention is needed for children with mental health issues in schools; the commission recommended the expansion of school mental health programs. The commission determined that, “schools are in a key position to identify mental health problems early and provide appropriate

services or links to services” (Hogan, 2003, p. 1472). Carlson and Kees (2013) surveyed school counselors who were members of ASCA representing various states. The researchers examined school counselors’ training and comfort with mental health counseling interventions in school; the survey also addressed school counselors’ self-reported perceptions in respect to the utilization and collaboration with school-based mental health counselors in addressing the mental health needs of students. A particular finding of the study indicates that “school counselors feel they are qualified to provide mental health counseling to students but that the nature of their job precludes them from doing so on a *large scale*” (p. 217).

PREPARE Model

In respect to rampage school shootings, the aftermath of such tragedies tends to have *large-scale* implications on the emotional and psychological needs of the students, faculty and staff, and the community in which the incident has taken place (Newman et al., 2004). Therefore, outside counselors such as school-based mental health counselors become a much-needed extended resource for the schools (Fein, 2001). Seeing the need for a crisis framework for school-based mental health counselors, members of The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) developed the PREPARE Model of School Crisis Prevention and Intervention. The model incorporates the U.S. Department of Education’s phases of crisis: prevention/mitigation, preparedness, response, and recovery; it also includes recommendations from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security’s National Incident Management System (NIMS) and its Incident Command Structure (NASP, 2014). The PREPARE model is a conceptual framework and its acronym represents a top-down, step-by-step set of tasks: *Prevent* and prepare for psychological trauma, *Reaffirm* physical health and perceptions of security and

safety, *Evaluate* psychological trauma risk, *Provide* interventions and *Respond* to psychological needs, and *Examine* the effectiveness of crisis prevention and intervention (NASP, 2013).

Borum et al. (2010) examined “empirical evidence of school and community violence trends ... [reviewed] evidence on best practices for preventing school shootings ... [and reviewed] crisis response plans to prepare for and mitigate such rare events” (p. 27). Their review included the PREPARE model. They concluded that “further empirical research is needed to examine all facets of contemporary crisis response activities” (p. 34).

Preparation, Action, Recovery Framework (PAR)

Although, NASP’s PREPARE Model training and materials include roles for other school leaders and personnel, its emphasis is aimed at school-based mental health counselors (NASP, 2014). McAdams and Keener (2008) studied national and state standards for professional counselors regarding crisis and crisis response; their examination included, but was not limited to, standards for counselor preparation by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling and Related Educational Programs (CACREP), credentialing standards by the National Board for Certified Counselors, the Ethical Guidelines for Counseling Supervisors of the Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (ACES) as well as ethical standards from the American Psychological Association and the ASCA. The researchers found that there was an “absence of a consistent and comprehensive conceptual framework for serious client crisis” (p. 389). To develop such a framework, the authors studied existing research regarding client violence and client suicide. The authors noticed that the literature referred to phase progression for each topic; it occurred to them to integrate the current knowledge regarding phase progression in mental health crisis, the use of phase-specific intervention coordination, and the significance of structured support for *all* crisis survivors to develop a sound comprehensive conceptual

framework. They eventually developed a comprehensive conceptual framework that addresses “mandatory counselor responsibilities in pre-crisis preparation, in-crisis action, and post-crisis recovery” (McAdams and Keener, 2008, p. 390). McAdams and Keener’s (2008) framework emphasizes the need for a balanced counselor focus to all phases of a client crisis. The phases include the following:

- 1) Pre-crisis Preparation: (a) acquiring accurate information about crisis epidemiology, etiology, and impact; (b) assessing risk factors associated with crisis conditions; (c) becoming informed and practiced in crisis response procedure; and (d) being clear about their own and their setting’s philosophies regarding why crises occur and who is responsible for dealing with them (p. 390).
- 2) Pre-crisis Awareness: counselors must determine the limits of their technical and emotional readiness to deal with various crisis situations. They must also acknowledge the shortcomings of the therapeutic process in preventing and resolving all crises and the resultant need for personal and professional support at all levels of readiness (p. 391).
- 3) In-Crisis Protocol: ensuring the safest possible conditions for all individuals involved, temporarily shifting counseling priorities from long-term goals to immediate crisis resolution, adhering as much as possible to the predetermined crisis response protocol, and maintaining flexibility in response to changing crisis conditions (p. 392).
- 4) In-Crisis Awareness: The influences of professional territoriality, intellectual–emotional fusion, performance anxiety, and tunnel vision can each prove to be detrimental to safety and success during client crisis intervention by preventing a counselor from applying his or her full range of relevant knowledge, skills, and clinical judgment (p. 392).

- 5) Post-crisis Recovery: occurs in a four-phase process beginning with immediate physical, psychological, and emotional damage control or triage, followed by movement through progressive steps toward coping with losses incurred; reinvesting in the counseling process; and, finally, promoting change by integrating what has been learned from the experience into future thought and action (p. 393).
- 6) Post-crisis Awareness: includes the counselor's (a) temptation to abbreviate the recovery process, (b) inattention to client denial of crisis impact, (c) fear of intrusion into the client's personal recovery process, and (d) self-neglect (p. 394).

According to the authors, the Preparation, Action, Recovery (PAR) Framework is not designed to take the place of a thought-out, collaborative, and well-rehearsed crisis response plan that is specific to the needs of an individual counseling setting; instead, its purpose is to guide counselors and ensure that crisis response protocols, no matter the counseling setting, are comprehensible and well informed in respect to the "nature, needs, and potential effects of crisis situations" (McAdams and Keener, 2008, p. 395). The authors add that supervision is critical for effective and ethical decision-making of counselors; in the aftermath of a tragic event, a supervisor's lasting support is essential to the counselor's recovery. The PAR framework aligns the supervision process with the counselor's needs throughout the crisis sequence. All in all, the PAR framework closes the gap among regulatory requirements of counseling standards in crisis response and careful definitions of the type of preparation counselors need to meet those requirements.

The PREPARE model and the PAR model are efforts to frame and guide counselors, school-based mental health counselors, and school counselors during a crisis; both models are

based on research, and although they are not solely dedicated to addressing rampage school shootings, the models provide guidance to counselors in such a tragedy.

Summary

By examining the history of youth violence, it becomes clear the rarity and special place in history of school youth violence regarding the series of school shootings that took place during the 1997–1998 academic year. The reader has been informed of the influence of the 97–98 school shootings on the nation and its influence on other school shooters who would contemplate such a tragedy at their own schools. It has been made clear by the special nature of these school shootings, the reason for a new term for them, “rampage school shootings”. Furthermore, a description of researchers’ attempts at understanding rampage school shooters has been offered; followed by a detailed explanation of preventive measures that have been put in place since the 90s in schools across America. Information in respect to crisis planning and responding, influenced by the U.S. government, has been provided as well. Furthermore, the reader has been presented with a synthesis of the information offered in discussing expectations of counselors in terms of crisis preparation, response, and recovery.

The reader has been given the context of the gap between the expectations of school counselors in crisis situations and the limited research of school counselors’ lived experience of rampage school shootings. The small number of studies highlighting lessons learned from school counselors who have lived through a hostage situation and school shootings has been detailed. Finally, counselor conceptual frameworks particular to crisis situations have been presented.

The counselor conceptual framework PAR, which addresses preparation, action, and recovery, and the lessons learned from the previous studies of school counselors’ lived experiences are used by this researcher in interpreting findings for this study and building a

working knowledge and/or framework, as well as providing meaning and strategies for other school counselors who have yet to experience a rampage school shooting.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to close the gap between school counselors' knowledge and skills significant in responding to a rampage school shooting by detailing the lived experience of three school counselors' response to a rampage school shooting. In other words, the study's findings provide meaning and understanding of rampage school shootings to other school counselors and relevant stakeholders. Chapter III of the current research, specifically, emphasizes the rationale for utilizing a qualitative single case study paradigm and methodology, describes the site of the event as well as details of the tragic event, and includes descriptive information of research participants and ethical considerations. Furthermore, the author uses this section of the dissertation to elaborate on data collection and analysis methods, validity and trustworthiness, and limitations and delimitations. The section is concluded with a summary that highlights integral aspects of Chapter III.

Research Approach Rationale

The information within this section explains how a qualitative single case study is suitable to addressing the study's central question based on case study principles investigated and offered primarily by Yin (2009). According to Yin (2009), one case study definition is as follows:

The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a *decision* or set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented, and with what result (Schramm et al., 1971, p. 6, emphasis added). (p. 17)

The current study is a single case study regarding school counselors' decision-making and course of actions taken throughout a crisis situation. Yin (2009) also states that a single case study is likened to a single experiment and a rationale for it is that it represents an important addition to knowledge and theory building; the current study not only adds to the research

regarding how school counselors respond (decisions and perceived expertness), but it also helps in supporting and/or altering a theoretical framework designed to help guide school counselors during a crisis situation; therefore, using the case study approach is appropriate for this study and its design.

Regarding the research design, it can be considered a “blueprint” for research. Yin (2009) states that there are five components of this blueprint: 1. A study’s questions; 2. its propositions, if any; 3. its unit(s) of analysis; 4. the logic linking the data to the propositions; and 5. the criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27).

The first component, a study’s questions, requires the *form* of the question to give a hint of the appropriate research method to be used. The case study method is more relevant for “how” and “why” questions; thus, the beginning task is to make clear the essence of the study questions (Yin, 2009). The study question for this case study is a “how” question that makes clear particular areas of focus: school counselors and a specific rampage shooting incident. The central question is, “how did school counselors respond to a rampage school shooting?” Sub-questions include the following:

- What were actions taken by school counselors upon first hearing of a possible school shooting to the immediate aftermath of a rampage school shooting?
- What are lessons learned from school counselors’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting?

The second component, its propositions, points to an area that should be analyzed within the scope of the research (2009). This study’s proposition: In describing school counselors’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting, it becomes apparent the critical decisions and actions in which school counselors were engaged in responding to such a crisis; this study’s proposition

helps to support other findings regarding the school counselors' response and lessons learned for other school counselors who may find themselves involved in a rampage school shooting.

The third component, its units of analysis, is referred to by Yin (2009) as the "definition of the 'case' (p. 30). For the study at hand, the units of analysis are *decisions (or courses of action taken)* and *perceived expertness* of counselors who experienced a rampage school shooting incident.

The fourth component is the logic linking the data to the propositions. For the research under investigation, the chosen analytical strategy is *relying on theoretical proposition* and the analytical technique to be used is *time-series analysis* to link the data to the propositions. More specifically, the research will be guided by uncovering the specific decisions taken and actions of the counselors; the researcher focuses on the following breakdown of time intervals (1st, 2nd, 3rd): 1st phase) crisis training and assessments of assailants before the crisis; 2nd phase) the counselors' responses during the attack; 3rd phase) the counselors' responses during the immediate aftermath of the rampage school shooting.

The fifth component is the criteria for interpreting the findings. School counselors are typically the first line of help for students experiencing mental health crisis situations (ASCA, 2012); however, little to no research has been done regarding the school counselors' response to hostage events (Daniels et al., 2007). Thus, the gap between the knowledge and skills significant for effective counselor response to such events are wide (Allen et al., 2002). Researchers suggest the creation of post-shooting crisis response plans that include counseling services (Newman et al., 2004). There are two studies of school counselors' responses to hostage and rampage school shootings that are significant in assisting school counselors in conceptualizing how to react to a rampage school shooting or hostage event; however, more research is required to gain sufficient

understanding and meaning for prevention and preparation strategies in developing a school rampage shooting framework for school counselors. McAdams and Keener (2008) developed a conceptual framework for counselor preparation and response in crisis situations (PAR).

The PAR framework developers researched literature pertaining to client violence and client suicide to develop a framework for preparation and response to client crisis. The PAR framework identifies “mandatory counselor responsibilities for pre-crisis preparation, in-crisis action, and post-crisis recovery” (McAdams and Keener, 2008, pp. 389–390). Although the PAR framework addresses client violence, it is not specific to counselors and clients’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting. To develop a theoretical conceptual post-rampage school-shooting framework for school counselors, the PAR framework will be used as a starting point to guide development. Thus, in building a working theory for a school counselor post-shooting framework, modification of the PAR framework is expected.

The conceptual framework is PAR or preparation, action, and recovery and it consists of six phases: pre-crisis preparation, pre-crisis awareness, in-crisis protocol, in-crisis awareness, post-crisis recovery, and post-crisis awareness (2008). The PAR conceptual framework is used to assist in interpreting the findings of the current research and in developing a working framework. The two other studies that examined the lived experience of school counselors involved in a school shooting to report lessons learned from the field are, *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor’s response* by Daniels et al. (2007), and Fein’s 2001 dissertation on school leaders’ lived experience of school shootings in which Fein et al. (2008) conceptualized his findings specific to school counselors in an article entitled, *School shootings and counselor leadership: Four lessons from the field*; findings from both studies are used to assist in interpreting the findings of the current study; Austin’s (2003) self-report of her

experience of the Columbine High School rampage school shooting will be used as a supplement.

Focus of the Study: Research Setting and Context

The focus or context of the study is centered on the research site, the deadly rampage school shooting and counselors' expertness and decisions (or course of actions taken) throughout the ordeal. According to Fox et al. (2003), community members explained the Westside community as an unlikely setting for violence, especially a mass school shooting. Near Jonesboro, AR, Bono is a small, growing city in northeast Arkansas. The Westside School District is one of five public school districts in the surrounding area. The elementary, middle, and high schools in the district encompass one huge property, but each campus is unique. For the 1997–98 academic year, the year of the school shooting, there were up to 250 pupils in Westside's middle school, 125 students in sixth grade as well as 125 students in seventh grade. Before the tragic event, the pressing safety issue dealt with the timely arrival of school buses during the mornings. The school "had no violence prevention programs beyond anger management counseling in place at the time of the shooting" (p. 102).

On the morning of the tragedy, the shooters, Mitchell and Andrew were absent from the school facilities. At approximately 12:35 pm, Andrew Golden walked into the middle school and pulled the fire alarm. Students, teachers, personnel began exiting the building hearing sounds that resembled firecrackers, but were not aware of any danger until fellow students and teachers began falling around them. The shooters were eventually apprehended by law enforcement about 200 yards from the scene and 10 minutes after the shooting had started (Fox et al., 2003).

Studies have been done to investigate possible causes for this tragedy; however, the focus of this study aims to discover the school counselors' decisions and actions taken in response to

the tragic happening. More specifically, this research studies the counselors' lived experience to focus on counselors' preparedness, actions taken during and immediately after, including counselors' interventions, support methods, and leadership collaborations during and after the crisis.

Research Sample and Data Sources

To gain entry to the research site, the researcher notified and received permission from the superintendent of the school district. A formal letter was sent to the perceived gate keeper to the site referencing the specific intentions of the research. Upon the superintendent's approval, the researcher completed a focus interview with the superintendent to ascertain among other information who besides specific school counselors to interview; thus purposeful sampling or interviewing has taken place with the superintendent and one school counselor; one of the school counselors who was a school counselor at the nearby elementary school during the time of the event. As with the superintendent, the researcher identified other potential interviewees from recommendations of the superintendent and a school counselor; this type of referral process is known as snowball sampling, choosing other data collection sources as an offshoot of existing ones (Yin, 2011).

Through the snowball sampling process suggestions for interviews resulted in interviewing a previous student (who is now over 18 years of age), a parent, and other school personnel. Access to these potential participants has been made through formal letters, phone calls, and/or personal interaction. Participants signed letters of permission and said letters include information outlining the research at hand, participant protections, and the option to withdraw from participation at any moment. Participants also have been given the opportunity to review

drafts of the study to verify information. Specific letters have been customized for each particular person.

Data Collection Procedures

According to Yin (2009), there are three guiding principles an investigator should follow when collecting data: 1) use multiple sources of evidence, 2) create a case study database, and 3) maintain a chain of evidence [audit trail] (p. 101). In respect to collecting case study evidence and using multiple sources of evidence, the researcher has obtained documents, archival records, and interviews. According to Yin (2009), documentation may take various forms and should be included in data collection procedures. For the current study, an attempt has been made to obtain administrative documents, formal studies of the same tragedy, and media articles. Documents and policies have been chosen or selected via the interview process; an attempt has been made to obtain administrative document in the form of a student handbook or crisis plan during the 97–98 academic year of Westside Middle School. The researcher intended to use this document to aid in providing context of a tragedy that was unexpected by officials. Formal studies of the same tragedy and media articles have been utilized; these documents have been analyzed through a document protocol. Formal studies or evaluations of the same and similar tragedies as well as media articles have been examined to corroborate and augment evidence from interviews; media articles have been analyzed using a media review protocol.

Archival records are relevant to this study as well. An attempt has been made to verify if survey data were used to collect information regarding symptomology, psychological, and/or emotional crisis as well as the number of individuals that signed up for or requested counseling services; the researcher has also attempted to obtain a map or sketch of the geographical characteristics of the parameters of the site. Furthermore, archival records in the form of email

correspondence and leadership notes have been collected and utilized. Archival records have been analyzed using an archival record's protocol.

Interviews have been conducted as guided conversations. In-depth interviews have taken place with counselors while more focused interviews have taken place with school personnel, previous students, parents, and/or law enforcement. Interviews were recorded using recording devices. Before the researcher administered an interview, the researcher obtained the participant's permission and informed consent. Interview protocols have been used to analyze the various interviews.

Data triangulation is the reason for using multiple sources. As mentioned by Yin (2009), an advantage of using multiple sources of evidence is the creation of *converging lines of inquiry*, a method of triangulation and corroboration. This method helps to build trustworthiness of the study and assist in its accuracy. Data triangulation has been used to support the facts of the case through more than a single source of data; thus convergence of evidence is evident.

A case study database has been created and used to increase the reliability of the entire case (Yin, 2009). Within this database, a collection of case study notes has been developed through typing contact/site description summary forms for interviews and document analysis; this collection has been housed in a folder for easy access. The case study notes, narratives, and study documents have been organized by interviewee transcripts, document and media report protocols, and archival document protocols. Thus the case notes have been "organized, categorized, complete, and available for later access (Yin, 2009, p. 120)." Case study notes, case study documents, and interview narratives have been collected and stored electronically in pdf format.

Lastly, a chain of evidence (or audit trail) has been maintained also to increase reliability of the information in the case. According to Yin (2009), first, the report itself has included sufficient citation to the most important sections of the case study database by citing particular documents, interviews, and observations. Next, the database, upon examination, has made clear the actual evidence and circumstances in which the evidence was obtained (e.g., time and place of the interview). Afterwards, such circumstances are in-line with the particular procedures and questions indicated in the case study protocol; thus, making plain that procedures addressed through the protocol have been followed in retrieving data. Finally, a careful inspection of the protocol has made clear the connection among the content of the protocol and the original study questions.

To assure confidentiality, all data collected have been copied and saved on an external hard drive; furthermore, all electronic information is only accessible to the researcher. All physical copies of information are securely stored and locked in a filing cabinet at the researcher's place of living.

To address all other ethical considerations, an institutional review board has been utilized, supervision by the dissertation committee, the American Counseling Association Code of Ethics and Standards has been followed, and strategies to ensure reliability and validity have been planned and followed.

Data Analysis

A general strategy to be used in data analysis is relying on theoretical proposition. In this study the theoretical proposition is the following: In describing school counselors' lived experience of a rampage school shooting, it becomes apparent the critical decisions and actions in which school counselors were engaged in responding to such a crisis; the proposition guides

the case study analysis, helps to focus data, organize the entire case study, and defines other explanations to be examined (Yin, 2009).

After all of the data were collected, *a priori* coding was used with the assistance of computer technology, NVIVO, to code and categorize data through identifying patterns from various sources bounded by the PAR conceptual guidelines which follow a time series (pre-crisis, in-crisis, and post-crisis) as well as decisions, and perceived expertness of counselors. Because the study is looking at data through a defined allocation of time, a time-series analysis technique was utilized. The school counselors' crisis training and assessment of assailants before the crisis, initial understanding that shooting had taken place, and decisions or implementation of interventions and expertness of counselors during and in the immediate aftermath of the tragedy define the timeline.

The PAR conceptual framework (guidelines to responding to any crisis situation) has been used to assist in interpreting the findings of the current research and in developing a working framework for school counselors. Two other studies examined the lived experience of school counselors involved in a school shooting to report lessons learned from the field; *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor's response* by Daniels et al. (2007) and Fein's 2001 dissertation on school leaders' lived experience of school shootings in which Fein and collaborators conceptualized his findings specific to school counselors in a 2008 article entitled *School shootings and counselor leadership: Four lessons from the field*. The two studies have been used to assist in interpreting the findings of the current study. Austin (2003) is a school counselor who was involved in the aftermath of one of America's most notorious school rampage shootings. She wrote of her personal experience as well as fellow

school counselors who lived through the tragedy. Her report served as a supplement to the peer-reviewed studies in helping to interpret the findings of the current research.

Validity and Trustworthiness

Reliability and validity are traditional terms associated with issues of trustworthiness (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). According to Kerlinger (1973), reliability in relation to research means the same as “dependability, stability, consistency, predictability, [and] accuracy” of research measures (p. 442). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that reliability is a precondition of validity; in other words, “an unreliable measure cannot be valid” (p. 292). According to Yin (2011), a valid study is one that has correctly collected and analyzed its data, so that the findings accurately mirror and represent the authentic world that has been studied; furthermore, researchers should utilize design features that will promote the validity of their conclusions and assertion.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), who completed a review of the literature, have concluded that many researchers prefer to use the words *credibility* and *dependability* in place of *validity* and *reliability*. Lincoln and Guba (1985) are researchers who deem the word *credible* as more operational than the word *validity*. The authors state there are several techniques researchers may perform to assure credibility. Three of those techniques are of interest for this study: peer debriefing, member checks, and triangulation. *Peer debriefing* is inviting a peer to analyze field notes and the peer provides critical thinking through asking questions aimed at challenging the researcher’s assumptions as well as encourage the researcher to contemplate different ways of perceiving evidence. For the current study, an individual was selected for peer debriefing, and the debriefing process has taken place. In fact, the researcher met with such individual on several occasions to peer debrief regarding the design of the research, to critique interview questions,

and to discuss coding techniques and procedures. *Member checks* is a way of making sure the participants' views are accurate and free from the researcher's bias. The researcher of this study completed member checks by sending the interview transcriptions to interviewees for review and accuracy. Two of the interviewees responded with minor changes while others stated their transcriptions were accurate. *Triangulation* is utilizing multiple ways of collecting evidence; thus corroborating data via those different methods used. For this study, the researcher identified patterns in converging evidence from interviews, documents, and archival records. In total, eight interviews were completed and transcribed. In addition, two texts that included previous formal research on the tragedy at hand, five newspaper articles, two magazine articles, a radio transcription, two archival leadership email correspondence, and archival leadership notes were analyzed through appropriate protocols. These items were used to identify patterns in converging evidence.

According to Yin's (2011) interpretation of Murphy (2009) using *comparison* is a way to address validity issues. Thus, the researcher of the study at hand has used comparison to "compare explicitly the results across different settings, groups, or events [other school counselors' lived experiences of school shootings]" (Yin, 2011, p. 79). More specifically, Fein's (2008) research on school counselors' response to four North American school shootings from different areas of the United States was compared with the findings of the research at hand as well as Daniels et al.'s (2007) research of a school counselor's response to a school shooting that took place in the Western part of the United States.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) interpreted Lincoln and Guba's (1985) explanation of *dependability* as referring to "whether one can track the processes and procedures used to collect and interpret the data" (p. 113). Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that a "major technique for

establishing” dependability and conformability is an “explication of the audit process” (p. 318). The study at hand includes an *audit trail*; the audit trail offers specific elements and thought-out statements of data collection and analysis. Another way to address dependability is soliciting a person independent of the research to separately code data. The researcher of the current research has acquired an *independent analyst*; the independent analyst and the researcher spoke via phone and met twice (once to debrief over coding procedures and again to compare results); the independent analyst coded some of the data separately from the main researcher using open coding while the researcher started with *a priori* coding and then open coding to identify sub-codes and themes; the analyst’s coding was compared with the main researcher’s coding as a method of verifying consistency and eliminating possible researcher bias.

According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), *transferability* has to do with *fittingness*; *fittingness* is the “degree of congruence between sending and receiving contexts” (p. 124). Another way of expressing it is the “fit or match between the research context and other contexts as judged by the reader” (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012, p. 113). To meet the criteria for transferability, Lincoln and Guba (1985) encourage the use of rich, thick data. In explaining thick description, the authors mention that it is a reasonable expectation of a researcher to offer enough information regarding the context of a study; thus, any other interested researcher or practitioner has a “base of information appropriate to the judgment” for transferability (pp. 124–125). For the current research, thick description is used to cover the detailed contact site description (or observation) and narrative (or in-depth interviews) of the school counselors.

In summary, the researcher used qualitative research techniques to address issues of trustworthiness or reliability and validity. The terms credibility, dependability, and transferability are used as they are more modern terms used by researchers. In respect to *credibility*, the

researcher has used techniques such as peer debriefing, member checks, triangulation, and comparison; for *dependability*, the researcher utilized an audit trail and an independent analyst; and for transferability, the researcher used rich, thick data.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations refer to external circumstances that hinder the study's scope (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012). Limitations of this study included the possibility of not having access to some of the assumed participants and areas of the site. In addition, studies that are used to help guide this study (theoretical framework section) are believed accurate and research based. Furthermore, because this tragedy took place in the past, the potential for interviewee memory loss exists. Lastly, as with all case studies, generalizing such a study could be problematic. According to Yin (2009):

Case studies, like experiments, are generalizable to theoretical propositions and not to populations or universes. In this sense, the case study, like the experiment, does not represent a "sample," and in doing a case study, your goal will be to expand and generalize theories (analytic generalization) and not to enumerate frequencies (statistical generalization). (p. 15).

For this study, the researcher primarily used Yin (2009) and Yin (2011) as research guidelines for completing a single case study. The researcher also primarily used guidelines from Lincoln and Guba (1985) in dealing with issues of trustworthiness.

According to Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), delimitations are conditions or parameters that limit the scope of the research. The parameters of this study included the school area including the playground area in which the shooting took place, the date and timeline of the event as well as the counselors' response to the tragedy. First, the *school or site area* was the West Middle School in Bono, AR; located in the northeastern part of Arkansas near Jonesboro, AR, a Bible belt town, surrounded by flat farmland, characteristic of what Arkansans called the "Delta" (Fox et al., 2003, p. 102). The residents are close; in fact, most have graduated from the

middle school. The Westside School District is one district among five in the area. The elementary, middle, and high schools in the district make up one massive property, but each campus is different (Fox et al., 2003). The rampage school shooting took place on the playground area of the middle school. Teachers and students found themselves blocked into the area; they had come out of the building because of the sound of the fire alarm, but they were unable to go back into the building once the shooting began because the door had already been locked (Newman et al., 2004).

Second, the *timeline of events* has three phases. The researcher focuses on the following breakdown of time phases (1st, 2nd, 3rd): 1st phase) crisis training and assessment of the assailants before the attack; 2nd phase) the counselors' response during the attack; 3rd phase) the counselors' response during the immediate aftermath of the rampage school shooting.

According to Newman et al. (2004), one of the assailants, Andrew Golden, had spoken to another student regarding harming other students; afterwards, the informed student relayed the message to an adult, supposedly the school counselor. The first phase includes rumors such as these and the actions that took place after information was shared. The second phase begins separately for each of the school counselors; the second phase begins the moment each school counselor recognizes that a shooting is happening at the Westside Middle School. The morning of March 24th, 1998, the shooters, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden were absent from the school facilities. At approximately 12:35 pm, Andrew Golden walked into the middle school and pulled the fire alarm. Students, teachers, and other school personnel began exiting the building hearing sounds that resembled firecrackers, but were not aware of any danger until fellow students and teachers began falling around them. The shooters were eventually apprehended by law enforcement about 200 yards from the scene and 10 minutes after the shooting had started

(Fox et al., 2003). The last phase begins once school counselors are aware that the perpetrators have been apprehended. It is referred to as the immediate aftermath of the tragic event.

Third, the *three school counselors* are pivotal to this study. There was one middle school counselor who lived through the rampage school shooting. In addition, there were two elementary school counselors who lived through this experience.

The three distinct parameters described for this study are essential. Clarifying and understanding the limitations and delimitations of the current study is important in comprehending the study's transferability. Transferability refers to the "ability to apply findings in similar contexts or settings" (Bloomberg and Volpe, 2012).

Summary

In respect to Chapter III, the reader has been presented with a rationale for the qualitative single case study methodology for the current research as well as the five components of a research design according to Yin (2009), and an explanation of how the study at hand fits each component. The reader has also been informed of specifics regarding the research site, Westside Middle School, context regarding the likelihood of a school shooting in the area, and an overview of the happenings of the rampage school shooting that took place there. Furthermore, Chapter III details how the researcher negotiated entry to the site via the superintendent of the school, contacting the primary interviewees, and snowball sampling to identify other interviewees of interest. A review of data collection procedures has been addressed. Particular procedures of importance include using multiple sources of evidence through obtaining documents, archival records, and interviews. A description of the data analysis process has been afforded the reader. The analysis is guided by a theoretical proposition; data were broken down through *a priori* coding and assistance of NVIVO, computer technology. Attention has also been

given to issues of trustworthiness. The following techniques minimize trustworthiness problems: *credibility*: peer debriefing, member checks, triangulation, and comparison; *dependability*: audit trail and an independent analyst; and *transferability*: rich, thick description. Lastly, limitations and delimitations were discussed; highlights from this section include potential of limited access to participants and site, the accuracy of comparison studies, interviewee memory loss, and instead of generalizability (not relevant for this study), this study aims to minimize issues related to transferability.

CHAPTER IV: RESEARCH ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

The purpose of this case study was to describe school counselors' lived experience of a rampage school shooting. Of particular significance were actions taken by school counselors during and after the crisis as well as lessons learned from school counselors' lived experience of a rampage school shooting. This chapter's first section offers the reader a detailed description of the researcher's audit trail and collection of database materials. This section has been included to provide transparency to the reader. The next section includes participants' backgrounds and pseudonyms. This section gives historical information of each interviewee up to the time of the shooting. It gives the reader more context in comprehending the school counselors' response to the incident. Pseudonyms have been provided to protect interviewees' identity. The third section describes the path that each school counselor engaged while responding to the crisis. This section gives clarity to the environment in which school counselors' were actively responding. The analysis section follows the path of school counselors' action. The section reviews and explores the methodology, conceptual framework, theoretical integration, coding procedures, and categories and themes. Afterwards, findings have been detailed to address the researcher's goals and purpose. Then, the researcher provides comparisons of findings from studies that examine school counselors' response to school shootings to the findings of the current research. Lastly, a summary is provided with highlights of important points from the chapter.

Gathering Data

This section gives the reader an indication of the researcher's audit trail and collection of database materials. Not only is recruitment for interviews discussed, but also precautions the researcher used in case there was equipment failure. In addition, this section explores how the researcher gained additional data through guided observations. Lastly, this section explains the

researcher's inability to obtain certain documents and records, but was able to obtain other significant documents and archival records. The intention of this section is to provide transparency to the reader regarding data gathering.

Interviews

There are various methods of collecting data in qualitative research, such as performing observations, collecting documents, including media reports and previous formal research conducted, and collecting archival materials; however, a primary way of obtaining information for qualitative researchers is through interviews. For this study, the researcher completed one-on-one in-depth sitting interviews with eight persons. First, the interviewer contacted the superintendent of Westside Consolidated school district via phone and email correspondence. The researcher sought permission to enter the school campus to conduct research as well as interview individuals on school property. The superintendent granted the researcher entrance to the site for research purposes; however, the superintendent stated that it was up to the potential interviewees to interview with the researcher (personal communication, 2015). Second, the researcher asked the superintendent for potential persons to interview; the superintendent was unable to generate names of individuals who had lived through the tragedy except for Mrs. Julia Rhodes (see section titled, "Participants' Background and Pseudonyms"), an elementary school counselor during the time of the rampage school shooting whom the researcher had already met before through the state's counseling association (personal communication, 2015). Third, the researcher contacted Rhodes regarding scheduling time to interview her and locate other potential interviewees. Rhodes assisted the researcher in finding six other potential interviewees. After speaking with one of the six other potential interviewees, Mrs. Blanche Gabby (see section titled, "Participants' Background and Pseudonyms"), the researcher was assisted by Gabby in

reaching out to one other interviewee, Mrs. Dixie Casey (see section titled, “Participants’ Background and Pseudonyms”). Finally, the researcher contacted and requested to interview each potential interviewee; all of the interviewees granted the researcher an interview and times, dates, and locations were planned out. The researcher created an interview schedule (located in audit trail) that details the time, dates, and location of the interviews. The interviews happened over the course of four days, primarily in school personnel offices except for one interview that took place at a residential place.

Each interview was recorded using two recording devices in case one became problematic; one device was a hand digital recorder while the other device used was recording software on the researcher’s personal Macintosh laptop. In addition, school counselors (on two different occasions) guided the researcher through the steps they took during the crisis. The researcher, with their permission, videoed (using video software on the researcher’s Macintosh laptop) one of the tours and digitally recorded the other tour. The two additional (audio and video) recordings were transcribed as separate interviews from the one-on-one sitting interviews. Some of the recordings were transcribed by a transcription agency; however, all of the transcriptions were thoroughly reviewed and proofed by the researcher. The researcher transcribed recordings that were not transcribed by the transcription agency. Afterwards, transcriptions were sent to interviewees to check for accuracy. Only two interviewees replied with changes while others stated the transcriptions were accurate. In addition, the researcher took pictures of areas stressed by school counselors. The additional data were added to the researcher’s database.

Documents, Notes, and Records

The researcher created contact/site description and note-taking forms (or contact summary forms) to take for each interview; the forms are a primary aspect of the researcher's field journal. Each form contains a description of the site and the area in which the interview took place; each form also has a note-taking section that highlights the atmosphere and context of the interview, main points discussed, unexpected comments, reflection, and running notes. Two of the forms include detailed observations of the two school counselor tours. The researcher's field journal has been added to the researcher's database.

The researcher made a request to obtain administrative documents in the form of the 97–98 student handbook and the 97–98 school crisis plan; however, neither the superintendent nor the interviewees were able to get their hands on such documents. The researcher also requested archival records in the form of a blueprint, map, or sketch of the area during the 97–98 year as well as possible survey data or parent sign-in sheets, but interviewees were unable to assist the researcher in finding such records. One interviewee checked with the school's media specialist who was unable to locate such records. Another interviewee stated that she had sign-in sheets from the crisis, but considered the information too sensitive to share. Although the researcher was not able to obtain these specific documents and records, the researcher was able to obtain other forms of documents and records.

The researcher, through efforts of the interviewees, was able to obtain documents in the form of original 1998 local and state newspapers as well as 1998 national magazines that covered the crisis. The researcher was also able to search online to find relevant radio interviews as well as additional local and state newspaper articles of interest. Media reports were obtained through searching Google for participants' names, assailants' names, and rampage school

shootings in the 90s (and variations of the term “rampage school shooting”), and the school’s name. Although several media accounts were collected, only eight were relevant for this study. The researcher used a media protocol to analyze the data and included it in the researcher’s database.

The researcher was able to obtain archival records in the form of assigned leadership email correspondence and leadership meeting notes through the assistance of interviewee, Mrs. Blanche Gabby. The archival records were analyzed through an archival record protocol. The data were then added to the researcher’s database.

All data collected were sorted, categorized, and stored in the researcher’s database on an external hard drive. Copies of recruitment letters and emails, recruitment timeline, interviews scheduled, field journal (including contact/site description and note-taking forms), audio and video transcripts, document protocols, media protocols, archival records protocols, peer debriefing notes, member check notes, independent analyst notes, coding procedures memos and notes, and theoretical notes have been printed and stored in a binder accessible only to the researcher. The binder will remain locked up for safe keeping at the researcher’s home.

In summary, this section has provided transparency regarding the methods the researcher employed in gathering materials for the researcher’s database. Highlights from this section include recruitment (or snowball sampling), guided observations, inability to collect certain documents and records, alternative yet significant collection of documents and archival records, and data organization and storage. Lastly, the explication of this section assists in providing dependability and validity to the research at hand. To provide full transparency regarding how data were discovered, and prepare the reader for findings for this study, participants’ background, and roles at the time of the crisis, and pseudonyms are explored next.

Participants' Background and Pseudonyms

There were eight individuals who participated in in-depth interviews. The primary interviewees included three school counselors who worked within the district at the time of the crisis, one middle school counselor and two elementary school counselors. Five other individuals were interviewed to assist in telling the lived experiences of the school counselors. Those individuals include the previous school psychologist, a previous elementary school teacher (was also a bus driver), parent of a previous middle school child, previous middle school child, and the previous principal of the Westside Middle school during the time of the crisis. This section gives background information on each participant up to the year of the crisis, 1998, to give the reader a better understanding of the context within the school counselors' response to a rampage school shooting. All of the interviewees are female, white, and have spent a great deal of their lives living in the community. Pseudonyms have been used in place of the participants' real names.

Dorothy Ruth began her education career as an elementary teacher; she taught fourth and fifth grade for four years. While working on her school counseling degree, she taught fifth grade for one year in Bono, AR. Afterwards, she became an elementary school counselor at Westside Elementary School in 1985. She was one of two elementary school counselors at Westside at the time of the shooting in 1998. In addition, during the crisis, her son was a sixth grader attending the Westside Middle School (personal communication, 2015).

Julia Rhodes holds a degree in elementary and special education. She taught fifth grade in a private school; later, she taught second grade; afterwards, in 1987 she began working at Westside Elementary School as a teacher while obtaining her school counselor degree. In 1992, she was hired as a school counselor at Westside Elementary School. At the time of the shooting

in 1998, she worked alongside Ruth as one of the two Westside Elementary School counselors. In addition, during the crisis, her niece attended the Westside Middle School (personal communication, 2015).

Mary Rachel lived and worked in the Bono school system before local schools consolidated to become the Westside Consolidated School District. She taught music at every level (elementary, middle, and high school) within the district; she eventually pursued and obtained her counseling degree; she worked as a school counselor at the elementary and junior high level before becoming the first school counselor to work at Westside Middle School. At the time of the shooting in 1998, she was the sole school counselor at Westside Middle School (personal communication, 2015).

Blanche Gabby started as a teacher; she would later decide that she wanted to become a school counselor, in fact, she was a school counselor for a couple of years. Then, she obtained her certification to become a school psychologist. She became the school psychologist for several small schools in the Jonesboro area. Westside Consolidated School District was her primary district. At the time of the crisis in 1998, she had lived in Jonesboro for up to 30 years and was an educator in the area for 23 years. During the crisis, she was assigned a leadership position (Counselor Leader) over the Crisis Center, which was established the night of the crisis (personal communication, 2015).

Dixie Casey taught for 12 years before being hired as Westside Middle School's first principal. The school shooting took place in the second year of her administrative leadership and simultaneously the second year of the existence of the school (personal communication, 2015).

Sarah Shively worked as a second grade teacher in the area before the small schools consolidated to form Westside Consolidated school district. Once the new Westside Elementary

School was established, Sarah was hired as their art teacher for the next 17 years. After four years as the school's art teacher, Sarah also became a bus driver for the district. She was the bus driver for the assailants during the time of the crisis (personal communication, 2015).

Candace Clifton, while working on her teaching degree, served as the Westside Elementary School's traveling teacher aide during the time of the crisis. In 1998, one of her two daughters attended the Westside Middle School as a sixth grader, a classmate of one of the assailants (personal communication, 2015).

Elisabeth White at the time of the crisis was a sixth grade student and classmate of one of the assailants at Westside Middle School. During the time of the crisis, she had attended the Westside Consolidated School District from kindergarten through sixth grade. She had an established relationship with the elementary school counselors as well as the middle school counselor due to personal issues. Elisabeth had a couple of classes with one of the assailants and she tended to get along with him. The crisis took place on the same day as her birthday (personal communication, 2015).

All of the participants assisted in explaining how school counselors' responded to the shooting crisis. Each interviewee had her own perspective that helped to validate the school counselor's narratives as well as fill in any gaps and work through lapses of memory. Their backgrounds and relationships within the community played a part in their decisions during the crisis and the immediate aftermath that followed. To assist the reader further in getting a greater understanding of the context in which school counselors' responded, the physical path that school counselors' engaged during the crisis is explained next.

The Paths of the School Counselors

The paths that the school counselors took during the crisis are important to understand the areas in which school counselors' were active and responsive. According to Fugate (1998), there were three schools that were located on one central campus, "kindergarten through the fifth grade classes are in the elementary school, sixth and seventh grade in the middle school and eighth through the 12th grade in the high school" during the time of the crisis (p. 3A). According to the researcher's field journal and observation as written in the contact and site description notes during the visit with Ruth, not much has changed except for some additional buildings, a memorial, sidewalk changes, and playground modifications. The elementary and high schools are still within the same proximity of the middle school gym and middle school. The proximity is fairly close. According to White, "if you take off running [from elementary or high school] you will be there [middle school] in half a minute. It's not far ...". According to the researcher's field journal and observation, upon entering the campus,

The campus of the Westside schools has an open entrance, although the back of the campus area is fenced. The campus' landscape is hilly. Upon driving on campus, immediately to the left sits a building built since 1998. To the right, in very close proximity of this newer building, is Westside Elementary School. The newer building and the elementary school form a reversed "J" shape (not a perfect 90 degree angle), with the longer side of the reversed "J" being the elementary school. Although a hilly landscape, the elementary school parking lot is parallel with the elementary school. The parking lot is not massive, but on a normal school day, visitors may easily find a place to park.

To assist the researcher with his observations and descriptions, the two elementary school counselors, Ruth and Rhodes, walked the path they took to the crisis with the researcher from the elementary school to the middle school gym, the middle school, and the area in which the shooting took place. The researcher videoed this happening, later took pictures, and detailed it in his field journal. The following description is detailed in the researcher's field journal:

After our interview came to an end, [Rhodes] suggested to me [researcher] that we walk down to where she left the elementary school during the rampage school shooting to assist others. I agreed. On our way out of the elementary building, [Rhodes] invited [Ruth] (the other elementary school counselor) to join us. [Ruth] gladly joined us. [Rhodes] led us through the hallway to the lobby and eventually through the front entrance double doors. Out the double doors, we took a left and walked down the walkway. After taking only a few steps, there were two sets of double doors to our right that was another entrance/exit to the elementary school. The sets of double doors were painted scarlet or red with clear windows located at the top section of each door. The number 2 is located on the top right corner of the right door. The number is white instead of red. [Rhodes] explained that she exited these double doors during the crisis. In front of the set of double doors is a walkway and across from it, the parking lot which [Rhodes], during the crisis, jumped on the back of a red pickup truck, that drove down to the gymnasium. The mini-road that goes from the elementary school to the middle school gym, leads to a rounded cul-de-sac surrounded by the gym and the middle school. I [researcher] could stand in the elementary school parking lot and see this area very clearly as it is in walking distance.

Rhodes explained during her interview that the red pickup truck was used to take possible needed supplies down to the crisis. Ruth, instead of working with the supplies, left ahead of the truck and walked down to the crisis on the walkway or sidewalk which is described in this section of the researcher's field journal:

Once on the walkway in front of the twin set of red double doors, the walkway led us down a short curvy passage. Barely a few steps down the hilly walkway, to our right, we can visibly see the elementary school playground a few yards from where we were walking. The playground sits to the right of the elementary school. A few steps further, to our immediate left sits a new building since the 1998 shooting, a tornado shelter. The shelter sits on lower ground than the elementary school and is a fairly small building in comparison to the elementary school. A few steps more, to our near left, sits a smaller building, the music hall building. The music hall building is an add-on to the gymnasium since 1998. Other than the music hall, the gymnasium sits in the same place as it was in 1998. The gymnasium has brick columns, which seem to hold up the passageway to its front doors. The two front double doors include colorless, clear, and heavy glass surrounded by silver panes. Beside the doors sits a red garbage container, and beside the container sit two red and white benches with the letters "Westside" on the back of one bench and the letters "Warriors" imprinted on the back of the other bench. According to [Ruth], the benches were not there at the time of the shooting; however, during the shooting she saw bodies in this area before going into the gymnasium.

During the crisis, Ruth initially walked beyond the gym to get to the middle school before eventually going back to the middle school gym to assist in providing safety to students in the

gym (personal communication, 2015). Rhodes, after assisting with handing out supplies entered the gym to help provide safety to students as well (personal communication, 2015). The two school counselors led the researcher into the gym while tracking the path they took during the crisis as described in this section of the researcher's field journal:

[Rhodes] walked up to the gymnasium door and stated there was currently a class of kids in the gym, but we could walk in to show me [researcher] the area. As I walked in, the bell rang and kids were running out of the main gym area to the foyer area in which we stood. The foyer area is shaped like a square with walls on either side (the left side includes a trophy area) and wooden double doors straight ahead on the north wall. It took me about 10 steps from the entrance to the wooden double doors. The wooden double doors are parallel to the front entrance double doors. As the kids came out of the right wooden door, [Rhodes], [Ruth], and I entered the main gym area through the left wooden door. Once in the main area, it is clear that the floor of the gym is primarily designed as a basketball court. Designed for a full court basketball game, but also on each side of the gym there were areas for shorter, separate basketball games. There were two hanging basketball goals on each side of the gym and under the goals were red bleachers. The far back wall (north of us) included a hanging basketball goal, padding on the wall underneath the hanging basketball goal, and on either side of the padding are doors. On the right side of the basketball goal is a unit that keeps track of scores. We stood not too far from the entrance into the main part of the gym or the basketball courts. According to [Rhodes], when she entered this part of the gym during the crisis, most of the students were in the vicinity of the gym. They were not on the bleachers nor the back of the gym. Most were against the wall where we stood that is attached and surrounds the double doors. This side of the gym has offices and padding as well. According to [Rhodes], some students were hiding under desks in the offices, nervous and scared. Soon, we left the gym, the same way we entered.

The middle school is located at the end of the cul-de-sac. It faces the parking lot. The east side of the middle school is close to the high school; the west end of the middle school sits across from the right side of the middle school gym. The elementary playground area stretches from the elementary school to the back of the middle school gym. The middle school playground is beyond the west wing of the middle school. Mary Rachel, the middle school counselor, immediately before the shooting was directed by principal Casey to "go out there and check that playground and see if it's going to be dry enough for ya'll to take the kids out" (Mary Rachel, personal communication, 2015, p. 35). Rachel reenters the middle school building, and not soon

after, the fire alarm goes off. She exits the front of the middle school with the rest of the office personnel. Once on the sidewalk that goes toward the gym area, she hears shots and goes back into the middle school to inform the secretary to call 911 and process what is going on with principal Casey; she eventually goes to the west end of the building to check on the students and teachers. Later she would end up in the gym. Ruth and Rhodes walk the researcher through the area that Rachel would later describe to the researcher. The observation is detailed in the following section of the researcher's field journal:

As we walked beyond the gymnasium, the sidewalk took a sharp right angle. Previously [Ruth] and I had taken this walk and during our walk, [Ruth] explained that right before the angle there was an extended sidewalk that resided between the gymnasium and the middle school. I asked [Rhodes] about this section as well. She validated [Ruth's] statement that indeed there was a sidewalk in this area and now it is gone; according to [Rhodes] and [Ruth], the sidewalk was moved because it was decided that things shouldn't look exactly the same, especially this area because it was where individuals (including the injured and fallen) were concentrated during the shooting. I asked, where did the first teacher and students come out of the middle school for the false fire drill during the crisis? [Rhodes] stated the teacher ... and [Ruth] stated they came out of the back door of the west wing of the middle school. So, we walked down the grassy area between the gym and the middle school toward the back door of the west wing of the middle school. As we were walking, [Ruth] mentioned there was some holes that at one time were visible on the side of the gym. So, we looked briefly for the holes before going on to the back of the west wing of the middle school. We were unable to find the holes in the gym. [Ruth] mentioned that the day before the crisis, it rained; if it had not rained, the middle school children would have already been outside behind the west wing of the middle school; an easy target for the shooters.

According to Newman et al. (2004), their research supported the idea that Westside Middle School had an exit leading to the playground in front of the school gym; the playground was "bounded at the back by the wooded hillside only 100 yards from the front of the gym" (p. 8). The two assailants were in the wooded hillside wearing camouflage shirts firing down the backside of the school area toward the exit to the playground. There "gunfire ricocheted off the pavement and the walls" (p. 8). Rhodes and Ruth continued to show the researcher this area, as detailed in the researcher's field journal:

As we walked down the area between the gymnasium and the middle school, I noticed that the side of the gymnasium, which looks like a huge wall, is longer than the side of the middle school, which looks like layered bricks. From the grassy area, we could see the part of the elementary school playground on a hill behind the gym. Behind the middle school, there is a memorial area ... [Rhodes] stated the memorial area was not there during the time of the '98 shooting. In front of the memorial area resides the west wing of the middle school. There is a walkway that leads to an entrance to the side of the middle school. On the sides of the entrance are matching red benches. The entrance has double doors. The double doors are heavy, glass, colorless, with silver panes. During the 1998 tragedy, this entrance was the sole entrance out of the west side of the middle school. At the time of the tragedy, another wing of the middle school was in the process of being constructed ... Opposite the additional wing where a fence is now located is the area where the assailants were hiding in the weeds and shooting at students and faculty coming out of the initial middle school wing building.

After showing me this area, I inquired if the inside of the middle school had been changed and [Rhodes] and [Ruth] stated it has been changed. Afterwards, we walked back toward their offices. We walked along the side of the middle school headed in the direction of the gymnasium. Across from the front entrance of the middle school and across from the gymnasium sits a shared parking lot with an island in the middle. From this area, we can see the high school. We walked beyond the gymnasium, the attached band hall, and up the hill beyond the tornado shelter to the elementary school.

The path that school counselors engaged in response to the crisis plays a vital role in telling the school counselors' lived experience. Such information not only strengthens the transferability of the study, but also provides meaningful rich, thick data to help illuminate more of the study's findings. However, before detailing more findings, it is important that an explanation of how and what data were coded is made available next.

Analysis

This section explains the reasoning and strategy of breaking down information that has been gathered. More specifically, this section recaps the research design and conceptual framework as well as informs the reader of the researcher's use of theoretical integration and coding procedures. Lastly, the researcher provides the reader with the specific categories and themes that emerged from the coding procedures.

Design and Conceptual Framework

The research design employed makes clear the connection to the analytical strategy utilized by the researcher. To recap, the research design consists of five components as advocated by Yin (2009): 1. The study's questions; 2. Its propositions, if any; 3. Its unit(s) of analysis; 4. The logic linking the data to the propositions; and 5. The criteria for interpreting the findings (p. 27). The components build upon each other; for instance, the central question of this study is, "how did school counselors respond to a rampage school shooting?" To make the question more operational for the researcher, the following proposition was created: In describing school counselors' lived experience of a rampage school shooting, the critical decisions and actions in which school counselors were engaged in responding to such a crisis become apparent. From this proposition, the researcher focused on the following words "decisions and actions", and identified the following as units of analysis: *decisions (or courses of action taken)* and *perceived expertness* of school counselors who experienced a rampage school shooting incident. To link the data to the proposition, the researcher used an analytical technique called *time-series analysis*. By using *time-series analysis*, the researcher was able to identify the *decisions (or courses of action taken)* and *perceived expertness* of school counselors throughout the chronological course of the crisis. To assist the researcher in interpreting the findings, the researcher relied on a theoretical framework entitled, Preparation, Action, and Recovery (PAR) (for more detailed explanation of the research design, see Chapter III). The PAR framework is intended to guide counselor decisions and actions throughout a crisis; more specifically, it guides counselors through "pre-crisis preparation, in-crisis action, and post-crisis recovery" (McAdams & Keener, 2008, pp. 389–390).

According to Yin (2009), *time-series analysis* is an analytic technique that traces an event over time in detail. Embedded in the PAR framework is a time series (pre-crisis, in-crisis, and post-crisis). The framework in total has six phases with general guidelines and considerations (see Table 4.1)

Table 4.1

PAR General Guidelines

PAR Phases	PAR General Guidelines
Pre-Crisis Preparation (PCP)	“Counselors ... take general steps to reduce the chances of being blindsided by [a crisis]” (p. 390).
Pre-Crisis Awareness (PCA)	“Counselors must determine the limits of their technical and emotional readiness to deal with various crisis situations” (p. 391).
In-Crisis Protocol (ICP)	Counselors “efficiently and effectively expedite de-escalation and safe resolution in a serious client crisis” (p. 392).
In-Crisis Awareness (ICA)	Counselors are “aware of and able to overcome potential barriers to handling the event” (p. 392).
Post-Crisis Recovery (PCR)	Counselors help “crisis survivors become able to manage the debilitating effects of the crisis sufficiently to resume pre-crisis levels of functioning” (p. 393).
Post-Crisis Awareness (PoCA)	“Counselors recognize and work to avoid pitfalls common to each step in the recovery process” (p. 394).

(McAdams & Keener, 2008, pp. 390–394)

Note: abbreviations added by the researcher

The PAR conceptual framework guides counselors through issues of client violence; however, it is not specific to school counselors’ and clients’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting. To use the PAR framework for this study, the researcher employed a technique called theoretical integration.

Theoretical Integration

Corbin and Strauss (2008) define theoretical integration as “linking categories around a central or core category and refining the resulting theoretical formulation” (p. 87). For this study, the rampage school shooting is the crisis and the phases and general guidelines of the PAR framework are still relevant; however, the researcher has modified the general guidelines or categories to make them specific to school counselors responding to a rampage school shooting; thus creating the School Counselor Response to School Shootings (S.C.R.S.S.T.) Template, as evident in Table 4.2.

Table 4.2

Guidelines Comparison

Phases	PAR General Guidelines	S.C.R.S.S.T. General Guidelines
PCP	“Counselors ... take general steps to reduce the chances of being blindsided by [a crisis]” (p. 390).	Steps taken to reduce the chances of being ill-prepared to respond to clients’ needs during and after a rampage school shooting.
PCA	“Counselors must determine the limits of their technical and emotional readiness to deal with various crisis situations” (p. 391).	School counselors recognize their limitations regarding their “technical and emotional readiness” in dealing with a rampage school shooting and their “need for personal and professional support” in responding to a rampage school shooting (p. 391).
ICP	Counselors “efficiently and effectively expedite de-escalation and safe resolution in a serious client crisis” (p. 392).	Steps school counselors have taken to “efficiently expedite de-escalation and safe resolution” during a rampage school shooting (p. 392).
ICA	Counselors are “aware of and able to overcome potential barriers to handling the event” (p. 392).	School counselors were “aware of and able to overcome potential barriers to handling” the crisis of a rampage school shooting (p. 392).
PCR	Counselors help “crisis survivors become able to manage the debilitating effects of the crisis sufficiently to resume pre-crisis levels of functioning” (p. 393).	School counselors help the school system and “crisis survivors [of a rampage school shooting] become able to manage the ... effects of the crisis sufficiently to resume pre-crisis levels of functioning” after the crisis (p. 393).

PoCA	“Counselors recognize and work to avoid pitfalls common to each step in the recovery process” (p. 394).	School counselors help self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process.
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(McAdams & Keener, 2008, pp. 390–394)

Note: for abbreviations see Table 4.1

The S.C.R.S.S.T. is heavily influenced by the PAR framework phases and general guidelines. By creating the S.C.R.S.S.T., the researcher was able to use the phases and modified guidelines to assist with coding procedures. In doing so, the framework helps to interpret the data.

Coding Procedures

According to Crabtree and Miller (1992), researchers using “the most structured and closed approaches rely on *a priori* codes, based on either the research question or theoretical considerations” (p. 95). For this study, the researcher used a structured approach, relying on “*a priori* codes” that are based on a theoretical framework, the theoretical framework being the PAR phases and general guidelines, which the researcher modified and integrated into the S.C.R.S.S.T. (see Table 4.2).

According to Crabtree and Miller (1992), preliminary codebooks are typically influenced by a “conceptual model and/or a literature review” (p. 99). The authors offer a strategy of using first coded “text with the broad preliminary codes, retrieve and read these, and then develop refined sub-codes based on these larger segments of text” (p. 100). The broad preliminary codes for this study are the *a priori* codes referred to in Table 4.1; however, here are the abbreviations for those broad preliminary codes reiterated:

Pre-crisis Preparation	PCP
Pre-crisis Awareness	PCA
In-crisis Protocol	ICP

In-crisis Awareness	ICA
Post-crisis Recovery	PCR
Post-crisis Awareness	PoCA

These broad preliminary codes are fitting for the current research not only because they meet the time-series analysis requirements and have a theoretical influence but also the interview questions were structured based on the phases and guidelines (see interview questions in Appendices C–F). The task of the researcher or analyst was to code the data using *a priori* coding as well as identify sub-codes (or categories) that emerged for each phase from the data through open coding. The additional sub-codes (or categories) provided more detail as well as more codes (sub-sub categories) that emerged while analyzing the data; such sub-codes were able to “provide a better understanding ... [And] deeper insights” into school counselors’ lived experience of a rampage school shooting. Each sub-code was coded with the broad codes or *a priori* codes’ abbreviations (e.g., PCP–personal) to assist with organizing the codes.

Furthermore, the authors cite Miles and Huberman (1984) as suggesting that a researcher not only code his or her work but also use an independent analyst to code “a number of pages of text to test for both inter-coder reliability and the utility and appropriateness of the codes” (pp. 99–100). Afterwards, the codebook may be changed to address any “deficiencies” (p. 100). For this study, independent analysts coded some of the data; however, after debriefing with the independent analyst, the two concluded that the phases and modified guidelines were sufficient as *a priori* codes. In addition, sub-codes (categories and sub-sub categories) and themes were debriefed until final sub-codes and thematic patterns were agreed for the portion of the coding that was shared.

Before coding took place, the researcher started analyzing data by completing all data protocols. All data gathering protocols were structured based on the theoretical phases and guidelines (see protocols, Appendices C–H). By completing the protocols first, the researcher was able to gain some understanding of the decisions and perceived expertness of the school counselors and the timeline for those decisions and perceived expertness within a chronological order. Afterwards, the researcher coded all of the interviews and protocols by hand. However, a deeper understanding was not made clear until data and hand coding was uploaded to the NVIVO software. The NVIVO software was used to aid in organizing codes, sub-codes, and additional codes (or categories). The researcher uploaded to the NVIVO software transcripts of the one-on-one interviews, transcripts of guided tour interviews, completed document and media protocols, and completed archival protocols for additional coding and organization of data. Numerous sub-codes (or categories) were created. This extensive coding eventually led to a process of clustering through finding similar thematic patterns and ideas, resulting in themes for each broad preliminary *a priori* codes (or phases). Examples of the sub-codes (or categories) and themes are given next.

Sub-Codes (or Categories) and Themes

To show the categories and themes that emerged from the coding process, several tables have been created. Categories have been separated via preliminary *a priori* codes (or phases). There are six phases and therefore six tables of categories are presented; an additional table is presented that addresses the identification of time by each school counselor. Lastly, a table that shows the resulting themes that emerged from refining the categories is included (see Tables 4.3 through 4.10).

Table 4.3

PCP Categories

PCP Categories	PCP Sub-Categories	PCP Sub-sub-categories
PCP (Rec) - Communicating with Parents PCP (Rec) - Frequent Flyers PCP (Rec) - Include in Crisis Plans PCP (Rec) - Student Information Sharing Process PCP (Rec) - Teacher information sharing process PCP (Rec) - Training Teachers		
PCP - Counselor - Assaultants' Sessions	PCP (rec) - No Profile PCP - No At Risk Signs PCP - Session with Andrew (At Risk) PCP - Sessions With Mitchell	PCP - Mitchell At Risk
PCP - Crisis Training	PCP - Crisis Procedure PCP - Crisis Team PCP - Natural Disaster Training PCP - School Shooting Training PCP - Suicide Training	PCP - Bad Tragedies Experience
PCP - Relationships	PCP - Relationship with Parents PCP - Relationship with Students	

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given.

Table 4.4

PCA Categories

PCA Categories	PCA Sub-Categories	PCA Sub-sub-categories
PCA (Rec) - Approachable, Open Door PCA (Rec) - Crisis Training	PCA (Rec) - Research and	

PCA (Rec) - More School Counselors' Counseling PCA (Rec) - School-Based Therapy PCA (Rec) - School Counselor Support System PCA (Rec) - Stick to Your Specialty Area	Awareness PCA (Rec) - Improved Communication	
PCA - Problematic Referral Process		
PCA - Technical Emotional Readiness		

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given.

Table 4.5

ICP Categories

ICP Categories	ICP Sub-Categories	ICP Sub-sub-categories
ICP - As Leaders		
ICP - Directives	ICP - Fulfilling Directives ICP - Processing with Formal Leader ICP -Taking Directives	
ICP - Emotional & Physical Safety	ICP - Ensuring Emotional Safety ICP - Ensuring Physical Safety	ICP - Answering Questions ICP - Peer Support Groups ICP - Reassurance Strategy ICP - Sharing Details ICP - Accounting for Students ICP - Attending Physically Harmed ICP - The Gym is Safe
ICP - Professional Support Needs		
ICP - Professional Support Rendered		
ICP - Shifting Priorities	ICP (Rec) - School Counselor Priority ICP - Initial Priority ICP - Personal Influence	

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given.

Table 4.6

ICA Categories

ICA Categories	ICA Sub-Categories	ICA Sub-sub-categories
ICA (Rec) - Technical Skills and Qualities	ICA (Rec) - Nurturing Quality ICA (Rec) - Calming Effect ICA (Rec) - Reassuring	
ICA - Adult Emotional State		
ICA - Personal Influence		
ICA - Physically Harmed		
ICA - Professional Support	ICA - External Support Services Needed ICA - Professional Peer Support	
ICA - Rumor Talk		
ICA - School Counselor Challenges		
ICA - School Counselor Emotional State		
ICA - Students' Emotional State		

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given.

Table 4.7

PCR Categories

PCR Categories	PCR Sub-Categories	PCR Sub-sub-categories
PCR (Rec) - Students' Get Away		
PCR - As Client Survivor		
PCR - Directives	PCR - Fulfilling Directives PCR - Taking Directives	
PCR - Natural Disaster Training Payoff		
PCR - Professional Support Services	PCR - External Counseling Services	PCR - External Counseling Services Available PCR - External Counseling Services Needed PCR - External Counseling Services Rendered PCR - External Counseling Services Strategy PCR - Ferncliff Camp

	PCR - Media Support PCR - Personal Peer Support PCR - Professional Peer Support Available	PCR - External SC Professional Support Rendered PCR (Rec) - S. Counselor Role Flexibility PCR - Assigned Leader Support (PCR - C. L. Shifting Priorities) (PCR - C. L. - Counselor Relationship) (PCR - C. L. Unwilling Client) (PCR - C. L. Duties and Strategies) (PCR - Meeting Goals and Strategy)
PCR - School Counseling Services Available	PCR - Faculty Emotional State PCR - Parents & Students Emotional State	
PCR - School Counselor Challenges	PCR - Media Misinformation PCR - Unwilling Clients	
PCR - School Counselor Goals and Strategies	PCR - Console PCR - Genuineness and Trust PCR - Group Play Therapy PCR - Guidance Lessons (Safety) PCR - Listening PCR - Reassurance PCR - Referrals PCR - Shifting Priorities	

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given. The abbreviation C. L. stands for Counselor Leader. Coding within parentheses represents sub-sub-sub categories of a sub-sub-category.

Table 4.8

PoCA Categories

PoCA Categories	PoCA Sub-Categories	PoCA Sub-sub-categories
PoCA (Rec) - Back to Routine Quickly PoCA (Rec) - External		

Counseling Services PoCA (Rec) - Group and Individual Counseling PoCA (Rec) - Mandatory Debriefing PoCA (Rec) - Security Coordinator PoCA (Rec) - Understanding and Redirecting		
PoCA - Additional Training N.O.V.A.	PoCA - N.O.V.A. Debriefing PoCA - N.O.V.A. Trained Leaders	
PoCA - Adult Emotional State	PoCA - Elementary School Impact	
PoCA - Counseling Services Challenges	PoCA (Rec) - Media Under Control PoCA (Rec) - Offer Counseling Off Site PoCA - (Rec) Check Credentials and Backgrounds PoCA - External Counseling Services Challenges PoCA - Formal Leadership Challenges PoCA - Media Interference PoCA - Traffic	
PoCA - Everybody Changes	PoCA - School Counselor Support Needs PoCA - Denial and Survival Guilt PoCA - Faculty Long Term Impact PoCA - Parents' Long Term Impact PoCA - Students' Long	PoCA - School Counselor Emotional State (PoCA - Emotional Toll) (PoCA - School Counselor Blame) PoCA - School Counselors Unwilling Clients PoCA - Student Self-

	Term Impact	Neglect
PoCA - Extended School Counseling Services Needed		
PoCA - New Crisis Plan		
PoCA - Personal Aspect		
PoCA - Rumor Talk		

Note: Rec is an abbreviation for recommendations given. Coding within parentheses represents sub-sub-sub categories of a sub-sub-category.

Table 4.9

TT Categories

TT Categories	TT Sub-Categories	TT Sub-sub-categories
TT - Immediately Before Crisis		
TT - Crisis Begins	TT - Crisis Time Estimate	
TT - Assaultants' Caught		
TT - Immediate Aftermath		
TT - Aftermath		

Note: TT is an abbreviation for school counselors' *Timeline of Tragedy*

Table 4.10

Themes

PCP Themes	PCA Themes	ICP Themes
Assessments Crisis Training Relationships Recommendations	Technical Emotional - Readiness Referral Process Recommendations	Directives *Priorities Professional Support Safety
ICA Themes	PCR Themes	PoCA Themes
Emotional States Challenges Professional Support Recommendations	Directives *Professional Support Availability Goals and Strategies	Peer Professional Challenges Media and Traffic Challenges Students and Teachers' Challenges School Counselors' Challenges Recommendations

Note: Abbreviations represent six phases (see Table 4.2); the star (*) means a recommendation was given for that specific theme only in that particular phase.

The researcher has provided the reader with a recap of the research design and conceptual framework, an explanation of how theoretical integration has been used for this study, coding procedures, and a list of categories and themes that emerged through the coding process. The

information made available in this section is provided to the reader for purposes of full transparency and understanding of the researcher's process. Finally, the information shared gives credence or credibility to the researcher's findings; the next sections explore the research findings in more detail.

Findings

The aims of the research at hand were to explain school counselors' response to a rampage school shooting, their courses of actions taken and perceived expertness as well as lessons learned from the experience. This agenda was met by exploring the lived experiences of the two elementary school counselors and the middle school counselor at the place in which the tragedy happened; the goals for this study were helped by also examining how school counselors' responded through the perceived experiences of the middle school principal, the district's school psychologist, an elementary teacher who was also a school bus driver, a parent who was also a teacher aide, and a middle school student at the time of the crisis. Data gathered from interviews (including observations), documents (including media reports), and archival records were analyzed, categorized, and refined into several themes across six phases (seven including the school counselors' personal time table of the tragedy) (see Tables 4.3 through 4.10). The themes assisted in providing meaning (or primary considerations) for each of the phases. Each phase and their corresponding themes have been examined and the findings are provided for the reader; however, before explaining the findings for each phase and its themes, the researcher expounds on the perceived timeline of the school counselors to provide context for the rest of the findings.

School Counselors' Perceived Timeline of Tragedy (TT)

There were three school counselors who participated in this study; each of the school counselors took different paths in responding to the rampage school shooting (see The Path of School Counselors' section of Chapter IV). In addition, there were differences as well as similarities in each school counselors' perceived timeline of the tragedy. According to Fox et al. (2003), immediately before the shooting took place, it was thought that the assailants (Andrew Golden and Mitchell Johnson) would attempt to shoot individuals during lunch recess as they were positioned in the vicinity of the play area; however, the grounds were too "muddy due to rain the night before"; thus, students were not allowed to "go outside for lunch" (p. 110). What was not reported was that the individual who was sent by the middle school principal to go outside to check to see if the grounds were suitable for children to play was the middle school counselor, Mrs. Mary Rachel, who incidentally became the first person placed in harm's way:

... I went out on the playground; I was walking all around out there not knowing they [Golden and Johnson] were up there in the bushes ... And looking, assessing the water puddles and what have you, and I thought, 'No, she's [middle school principal] certainly not going to want them in the mud and they track all this in the building' ... So I went back in and I said, 'I don't think we can go outside today, we need to stay in' ... So, like I said I think that's where ... They [Golden and Johnson] wanted ... I don't think their plan was to come and pull [the] fire drill. I think they really truly wanted us to be out there and probably more kids would have been shot and killed ... And more teachers ...

Immediately before the crisis, the two elementary school counselors were completing normal school counselors' routines. Ruth was "going to the nurse's office. I had a re-a F.I.N.S [Family in Need of Services] report that I actually needed to file" before being notified that there was a shooting taking place at the middle school (personal communication, 2015, p. 32). At the time, the two elementary school counselors had co-joining offices and Rhodes was in the shared space as well as a teacher aide who was also a parent, Mrs. Candace Clifton. Clifton stated, "... I

was in there asking her about some kind of project ...” (personal communication, 2015, p. 24). However, it wasn’t long before the school counselors would learn of the shooting.

Crisis begins. The recognition of the school shooting happened at different times for the school counselors. While Ruth was in the nurse’s office, information “came over the walkie-talkie that there had been a shooting at the middle school” (p. 27). She did not have access to a walkie-talkie, but someone who did, informed her. Afterwards, Ruth went back in to their offices and informed Rhodes. Rachel, on the other hand, was aware of the shooting immediately. Rachel walked out of the front doors of the middle school with other office personnel as the normal procedure for a fire drill, within seconds

I thought it was ... I mean, it sort of ... everybody kind of described it as fire crack ... a fire cracker sound. But it really sounded more like a gun, a gunshot. But then, you know, we saw kids start tripping and falling and tripping and falling ...

Immediate aftermath begins. The immediate aftermath occurred for the school counselors at the time each heard that the shooters had been apprehended. By this time, all three of the school counselors were with the students in the gym. Rachel could not remember exactly who told her, “I think they came and told me that, I can’t remember who told me, they said that they had apprehended the boys and they were, you know, in custody” (p. 49). According to Rhodes, “once the police caught them ... the police came in ...” to the gym and informed everyone (p. 18); Ruth estimated how long the crisis had lasted,

Um, at that point they had not got the boys. They had not ... They were not ... um, they were still running or whatever and anyway so I don’t know how long we were in the gym, 20 minutes I don’t know, when a law officer came in and told the bo-told the students and said, ‘We, we have found the people that did this.’

Depending on the time in which the 911 call was logged and how long it took information to travel among officers, media reports may corroborate Ruth’s estimate. According to Homes (1998) in the local hometown paper, “The first 911 call was logged at the Jonesboro

Central Dispatch at 12:39, Tuesday afternoon. Ten minutes later, sheriff's deputies had taken the two young suspects into custody a few hundred yards away from the school" (p. 2A).

Aftermath begins. According to Ruth, the crisis had a longer-term impact on individuals (faculty and students) at the elementary school who had a personal relationship with the injured and deceased. Rhodes had similar sentiments, especially regarding the personal relationship the faculty had with the injured and deceased,

We knew those children. They had, you know, middle school had them maybe one or two years because that was just a sixth and seventh grade ... but we had [names of deceased students] and them for six years, from kindergarten through fifth grade.

Rachel, the middle school counselor, made clear that the aftermath was truly felt after everyone returned from the summer,

The more you stay home in a comfortable situation the avoidance of all that starts to set in ... that hurt us when we went home for the summer. Kids didn't carry through with their counseling and we were about almost back to stage one when we went back the next year.

The school counselors' perceived timeline of the tragedy has been detailed. Areas covered include the time immediately before the crisis, the beginning of the crisis, the start of the immediate aftermath, and the start of the aftermath. The next section explains school counselors' perceptions of their preparedness (or perceived expertness) before the crisis and lessons learned (or recommendations).

Pre-Crisis Preparation (PCP)

Finding One: Steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included counseling and assessing the assailants, earthquake training, and establishing relationships with students and parents. Lessons learned from this phase included having a secure student information sharing process, allowing school

counselors more time for individual counseling, development of post-shooting crisis plans, and additional crisis training for school counselors and teachers.

The pre-crisis preparation phase refers to steps and/or miss-steps school counselors had unknowingly taken to reduce the chances of being ill-prepared to respond to client's needs before, during, and after a rampage school shooting. Four themes emerged from the coding of this section of the data: assessments, crisis training, relationships, and recommendations (or lessons learned). Assessments refer to whether there were warning or risk signs shown by the assailants. Crisis training refers to training that school counselors experienced and was available to school counselors before the crisis. Relationships speak of the interplay between school counselors with parents and students before the crisis; lastly, recommendations deal with preparation suggestions from those who have lived through this experience for school counselors.

Assessments. Findings from the assessment theme show interesting data. Andrew Golden was a sixth grader at the time and Mitchell Johnson was a seventh grader. Golden attended elementary school at Westside before attending the Westside Middle School; however, Mitchell Johnson began his Westside Consolidated school district career at the middle school. According to Ruth, Golden “may have gotten into some trouble but ... it wasn’t a lot, so he was just one of those average students”. Rhodes stated Golden was “a very active child” but not a violent one. Rhodes continued by saying she would say to him, “Andrew get back in your seat”, quite often. However, she “would have never, ever dreamed he would have done something like that [rampage school shooting]”. According to Casey, the middle school principal, neither boy showed any at-risk signs of violent behavior. Casey stated that she leaned heavily on the middle

school counselor to inform her of students with at-risk behavior and was certain that the school counselor had not known of any violent risk behavior,

And you know back then we didn't have mental health in schools. We had a school counselor. And um, I had a wonderful, very experienced school counselor. Um, she was my right arm ... Um, she and I worked together very, very closely. Um, and, and you know, I don't remember her ever saying anything about either one of those boys. About any situation or trouble or anything that she had prior to that either.

Rachel, the middle school counselor, concurred that Golden "was not really a trouble maker". However, she did have a session with Golden to verify news from another child that Golden wanted to harm himself. She asked Golden about whether he told another child that he wanted to harm himself and Rachel said that Golden stated, "I didn't say that". Afterwards, Rachel informed Golden that she would have to inform his parents and go through steps to make sure he was okay. Rachel contacted his parents and stated, "Now, what I need you to do if you don't want me to do it, you need to take him and have an evaluation done"; she stated the parents said, "We'll take care of it". In addition, she informed Casey, the middle school principal who said, "Well, did you document it". Rachel stated that she did document it.

Newman et al. (2004) inferred that Golden may have also stated he wanted to harm others not just himself: "Andrew saw the school counselor about the threat he made to harm himself or other students, but it appears that this news never made it beyond the counselor and a school administrator" (p. 88); however, Rachel stated that "wasn't right"; She reaffirmed that the conversation with her and Golden was only about the possibility of self-harm.

Elisabeth White was Golden's classmate; she shared two classes with him and they were friendly toward each other. She stated that Golden, "... didn't seem to be a troublemaker at all"; however, according to Fox et al. (2003), another student stated Golden was planning to make trouble, that in fact, he had violent intentions. He was noted as saying in "a signed affidavit" that

after hearing of Golden's intentions, he informed his father and that he and his father informed the middle school counselor (p. 111). The school's position is that Golden only mentioned harming himself and *not* others; as a result the counselor spoke with Golden about harming himself. Golden responded with "he was just kidding" (p. 111). After the conversation, Golden's parents were informed of the threat to himself; the school counselor spoke with Golden's mother and inquired of Golden's availability to firearms. The mother stated Golden did not have access to guns and that the firearms within their home were locked away. The mother also stated she would converse with her husband about the situation and would "take care of it" (p. 112). The school did not take any further action (Fox et al., 2003).

Rachel also had sessions with Johnson. According to Newman et al. (2004), Mitchell Johnson saw the school counselor for problems with girls; however, Rachel stated that Johnson came to her office to complain mostly about football and his football coach. She stated she would try to motivate and encourage him. She stated, "Now Mitchell you're gonna have to tuffin' up. If you're going to play football, people that play football have to be tough ... You got to stick with it ...". Afterwards, Johnson would seem "okay".

Candace Clifton, parent and elementary teacher aide, often tutored Johnson's younger brother; Clifton stated the younger brother would often speak of family issues that were affecting the boys; she stated they had "a harsh home life", but there was no mention of the boys seeking or attending counseling for their personal troubles. Sarah Shively, the assailants' bus driver (also an elementary school art teacher) also stated Johnson had "some personal issues". She stated that Johnson had "a mean side to him" and that he was not the type of child she would let in "my home"; she alluded that he may have needed counseling, "and, and I don't know that he ever got counseling".

According to Fox et al.'s (2003) research, Mitchell Johnson was responsible for molesting a two-year-old child in Minnesota the summer before the shooting; once he was back in Arkansas, his mother took him to a psychologist for treatment. The psychologist concluded that the molestation was isolated. There is no mention of school counseling services, and no mention of whether teachers or school counselors were privy to this information.

Such different views of Johnson and Golden led Newman et al. (2004) to conclude that, "Virtually no training was devoted to spotting troubled students" (p. 107) at Westside, which seems to infer that faculty and staff should have been trained to spot "troubled students" (p. 107); Rhodes sees such a situation somewhat similarly; she states,

And, you know, I, if you had told me to pick and lined up a hundred kids and said, 'Okay which one of these would do the shooting?' I would, Andrew Golden would not have been at the top of my list. He would be in the middle somewhere. I would have never thought that of him. So, I don't know that there is a stereotype person ...

In terms of training, interviewees were asked about the availability and type of training offered to school counselors. Interviewees were asked about the perceived expertness and expectations of school counselors in such crisis situations. Interviewees' feedback and results have been highlighted next.

Crisis training. Comments regarding crisis training dominated this phase and comments were at times contrary. For instance, there were discrepancies in whether or not the school district had a crisis team and whether a school counselor was part of that team. According to the two elementary school counselors there was a district crisis team. Ruth stated, "I think there was a crisis team", and Rhodes stated it more clearly, "We did have a team". Rachel, the middle school counselor, disagreed, "No, it didn't exist". There were also discrepancies between the elementary school counselors; Ruth stated, "I don't think the counselors were a part of it at that point", but Rhodes stated, "And I think probably a counselor from one of the other buildings"

was part of the district crisis team. What is clear is that the three school counselors interviewed were not part of a district-wide crisis team.

Regarding a crisis plan, there were many who stated that the schools and school district did not have a crisis plan; however, there were those who also said that there was a crisis procedure in 1998. According to Fox et al. (2003), “the school had no violence prevention programs beyond anger management counseling in place at the time of the shooting” (p. 102). According to Newman et al. (2004), there were “no contingency plans in place to guide” the school’s nor the school district’s response to such a violent act (p. 273). According to the middle school principal, Dixie Casey, “No. We, we had, prior to that, um, we did not have a crisis plan”. According to the middle school counselor, Mary Rachel, “We didn’t have crisis ... plans”.

However, Ruth, one of the elementary school counselors, stated that there was, “some talk about what to do” during a crisis or an “invasion”. Rhodes, the other elementary school counselor, stated it was called, “a lockdown procedure” for such things as “a mad parent or someone trying to, to abduct a kid”. The procedure consisted of students and faculty staying locked in their rooms and there were certain codes to let individuals know when it was safe. According to Rhodes, during a lockdown the school counselors’ responsibilities were the same as teachers to “lockdown if I had children in my office”.

There was more agreement around natural disaster training. Rhodes replied that there was a “general natural disaster plan” that included such things as “suicides”, “a big truck having a wreck with chemicals on it”, “tornadoes”, and “earthquakes”. Ruth and Rhodes stated they both had suicide training, which was an aspect of the natural disaster plan, but “it wasn’t about, school shootings” (Ruth). Rachel agreed that there was no training or preparedness for dealing with a

school shooting. She stated her primary training dealing with school shootings and bad tragedies came from her experiences as a school counselor over the years,

I was not a stranger to bad tragedies because we had children, two or three shooting incidences, accidental shootings where actually kids were killed. Then we had a student that was actually hit by a train, a train crash. And then another student in my grade that was uh, um, actually, uh, in a car accident and was killed. So I had several of those issues that I had dealt with ... [as a school counselor].

The primary agreement centered on earthquake training. All of the interviewees stated that earthquake preparedness and training was taken seriously during the time of the crisis.

Rachel stated that she had a specific role during the earthquake mock drills, “I had a specific role. And I carried a backpack that had supplies and that sort of thing and I had to be accountable ... I was responsible for getting the emergency, getting, you know, ambulance, call 9-1-1 ...”

All of the school counselors had the responsibility of assisting with earthquake materials and providing a helping hand. According to Rhodes, “all of the precautions we took for that [earthquake] stayed in place” during the “day of the shooting”. Newman et al. (2004) came to the same conclusion as Rhodes, “disaster preparedness is a necessity in Jonesboro, a resource everyone had to draw on in the wake of the rampage shootings” (p. 17).

Relationships. Comments regarding relationships were not a huge part of this phase, but it was an important one. According to Candace Clifton, parent of a middle school child and elementary school teacher aide, Rachel, the middle school counselor had a very “supportive” relationship with parents and students. To assist parents, Rachel would “check on” students for parents so that parents were not “interfering as a mama”. She would “talk to the teachers” for parents. Clifton, whose child had also gone through the Westside Elementary school, stated all three of the school counselors were “approachable” and her “go-to-people” because she and her child had gone through many personal family issues and struggles. Clifton would go on to say

that her daughter had “a really good relationship with the counselors”. This relationship or bond that school counselors had with parents and students became an important emotional asset during the crisis. As Elisabeth White, a middle school student at the time of the crisis, stated, “they [Ruth], [Rhodes], and [Rachel] were more helpful because they were actually dealing with their students in the traumatic experience.”

Recommendations (or lessons learned). There were several recommendations given for school counselors regarding taking precautions and preparing for a rampage school shooting. Ruth stated that if possible a process that allows for student information sharing with trusted adults could help with prevention; she stated specifically,

But I think, I think in all the situations or most situations usually someone has said something ... and if that, if that person could, could tell someone, some of this could be prevented. I don't know how you do that ... build those communications and people they trust.

Sarah Shively, assailants' bus driver and elementary school art teacher at the time, recommended constant communication with families of “those high maintenance kids”. She also suggested that school counselors be given time to work with students with anger problems or who are “frequent flyers” to the office. Lastly, she suggested that school counselors' train teachers to keep from “antagonizing a child”.

Newman et al. (2004), after completing research at Westside suggested, “communities develop post-shooting crisis plans” that offer counseling services (p. 274). The authors also recommend schools “include screening procedures in crisis plans” (p. 274). Furthermore, educators should be trained to recognize “symptoms of trauma” and make counseling an important discussion with parents (p. 274).

Crisis preparation in respect to steps school counselors willingly or unknowingly took to reduce the possibility of being ill-prepared in responding to a rampage school shooting has been

discussed. Primary considerations for this phase consist of assessments, crisis training, relationships, and recommendations. School counselors' awareness of their limitations in respect to their readiness and support needs in responding to a rampage school shooting is discussed next.

Pre-Crisis Awareness (PCA)

Finding Two: School counselors' limitations in their perceived expertness included having minimal or unused technical skills before the rampage school shooting. Lessons learned from this phase include awareness of school counselors' attributes in building relationships, obtaining effective crisis training, awareness of the impact of a crisis on clients and self, the need for professional peer support, the need for more school counselors, the need for school counselors to do more therapy, and improved communication between outside counselors and school counselors.

The pre-crisis awareness phase centers around school counselors' recognition of their shortcomings in terms of their technical and emotional readiness and need for personal professional assistance in responding to a rampage school shooting. Themes that emerged from this section include technical emotional readiness, referral process, and recommendations (or lessons learned). Technical emotional readiness refers to school counselors' awareness of their technical skills (or perceived expertness) in assisting others and their emotional state, and how it affects their responding (or course of action) to the situation. The referral process refers to school counselors' recognition of their limitations in counseling others and their need for additional support with counseling services. Recommendations refer to lessons learned or suggestions for school counselors' awareness and recognition in their limitations in preparing for a rampage school shooting.

Technical emotional readiness. Before the 1998 school rampage shooting, school counselors' typical expectations were clear to interviewees. Guidance counselors were expected to "catch the warning signs and handle students' emotional problems ..." (Newman et al., 2004, p. 107), "support students academically and socially", "help parents ... that had some kind of issue with their child", "guidance counseling group classes", "individual counseling", "test coordinating", and "scheduling" (Casey). They also worked with student "hygiene", "getting along", and "conflict resolution" (Rachel). Furthermore, school counselors dealt "with family issues", "families in need of services", "students that were doing without food", and "classes dealing with ... good touch, bad touch, strangers ... being safe ... fire prevention week ... [and] bus driver safety" (Shively). White gave a personal example of how school counselors assisted her as a child using their technical and emotional skills,

Well, I mean, actually I did. Um, the year before my mom had passed away and, you know, I was able to go to them and talk to them every day or, you know, because that, I was 10 when that happened, and I didn't want her ... you know, like I, I didn't want to come to school because I know I wasn't getting to go home to my mom. So they were always there to, to talk to you and to comfort you and to make you feel better about being at school ...

However, school counselors' limitations were also clear. Although the Westside Middle School counselor was expected to deal with students' emotional problems, "she had no mental health training" (Newman et al., 2004, p. 108); "she ... wasn't qualified and didn't do any kind of therapy or anything like that. We didn't get to the deep-seated problems with kids" (Casey). Rachel went further to state that while working in the school district before working at the middle school, expectations of school counselors in dealing with students handling grief and loss included, taking "them out there under the big tree and quiet them down and see if you can get them settled down and bring them back in"; she stated, "they didn't want anything to get out of hand" or have one student who is "crying" cause another student to cry and many students are

affected. Rachel considered this expectation as not really “dealing” with students’ real emotions but “brushing” their emotions aside, but insist attitudes regarding counseling have changed. However, Rachel concluded by saying there was “nothing ... to prepare for what happened ... I didn’t really have any crisis skills except just things ... that I taught in group guidance with kids”.

Ruth, on the other hand, stated the rampage school shooting was personal and any crisis skills that she possessed felt previously unused,

As far as the skill level [pause] I think (sighs) well, let me think ... I think because I possessed the skills but I had never really had to use those skills and so (sighs) and then, then it wasn’t just something ... You know, a lot of situations you walk into it’s not necessarily personal ...

Referral process. Determining whether a student’s problem requires remedial therapy is not always clear-cut. In cases in which students needed more therapy than the school counselor was able to provide, the Westside school counselor would refer to an available school-based therapist (Newman et al., 2004). The middle school principal and school counselor concurred. Casey made clear that the students that were typically referred out were students who were “behaviorally challenging”. Rachel commented that, “if there were the occasional major issue, you know, they would refer out”. Newman et al. (2004) infer that the two assailants, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden, may have benefited from therapy beyond their school counselor.

Recommendations (or lessons learned). Recommendations for school counselors broke down to school counselors being aware of their traits, available trainings, client and personal emotions, and support systems. Regarding traits, it was stated that school counselors or counselors that have strong bonds and trusting relationships with parents and students are “approachable” and “have an open door” policy (Clifton). Another trait spoken about is the

awareness of school counselors or counselors being a good fit for the profession. According to Clifton,

I don't know why people stay with a profession that they're not really geared toward but it happens ... Looking back, I see what damage can be done by somebody that is put in that position as a counselor [referring to an out-of-district counselor] that really has no business ...

Clifton went on to say that prepared school counselors will have engaged in research and awareness by “reading” about rampage school shooting crisis situations, “going to seminars”, “talking to people that have been through it”, and finding available “programs” that provide meaningful information or experiences from “school counselors that have been through it”.

Gabby, who has participated in numerous crisis trainings since the tragedy, also stated prepared school counselors are aware and participate in crisis training programs before a rampage school shooting occurs at his or her school. She mentioned that effective “counselor education programs” provide crisis trainings and organizations such as the National Organization for Victim Assistance (N.O.V.A.) provide crisis trainings as well. Gabby continued, “Until you have crisis counseling, until you have practiced it and drilled it and lived and experienced talking to people ... You don't have the skill set.”

Gabby also stated school counselors that are prepared are aware of the effects of personal and clients' emotions; more specifically she spoke of being aware of the “aftershocks”, personal “mental health”, and “compassion fatigue” of such a tragedy,

And you have to understand the aftershocks are going to be the aftershocks just like an earthquake. Uh, you don't know when it's coming and you don't know what form it's gonna take. And the damage it's gonna leave. So there's a ... really fine balance between keeping your own mental health ... and appropriate adaptive skills and being vigilant, and also compassion fatigue.

Ruth also spoke of the personal awareness of school counselors as well as their need for support,

If someone is in a school or a school counselor and something like this happens in their school I think they also remember ... Need to remember that it affects them personally and they probably ... They need to have a support system and they need to, um, not be afraid to ask for help ... because you can't do it all. And if we hadn't had help, help I don't know what we would have done.

In regard to support, Rachel spoke about the need to have awareness of structural and professional support for more school counselors. She stated to create "a school [that is] more cohesive with your own counselor," "a community group of counselors" would make a difference. With "a community group of counselors - helping the kids" in the day-to-day activities of school, children would have established a relationship with several school counselors before a crisis such as a rampage school shooting.

Instead of "a community group of counselors", Shively advocates that a community of helpers within the school come together as a team to discuss "children that are high maintenance", whether "counseling is working", and parental feedback. She suggests that this team consist of the "nurse", "[school] counselors", "mental health people", and the principal.

Rachel not only spoke of professional peer support but also that some changes need to start at the state level,

The state needs to get things right as far as school counselors go. They don't need to be doing all this testing. They don't need to be doing all these entering grades into the computer. They need to be doing what they're taught to do, which is care for students and, uh, and their psychological welfare. You know, that's what we're trained, we're not psychologists, by no means, but we are trained to take care of students.

She continued by commenting on the awareness that school counselors need to do more therapy,

And that's not really good because, but that's what a lot of times counselors do, they do that and then they have school-based health people to come in and do the therapy ... Which I always enjoyed having small groups and doing the therapy myself, I don't know why we can't get back to that. If we had, were back to that and they had somebody else to do this other. I think we'd have a healthier school environment for our kids ... Because I went through the training to work with the students ...

Casey agreed that school counselors need more support, but she focused more on assistance from outside helpers rather than more school counselors. She stated, “I’d like to see more social workers, more a, you know more therapists” working with the schools. She also gave the caveat that with more helpers, schools need to focus on improved communication between the helpers and the schools. She stated,

Well we’d refer them out to somebody we never got any feedback. We never, we never, sometimes kids were in, were in therapy and we didn’t even know it. You know. You know parents can sign off and allow for that informa-, some of the in, information to be exchanged back and forth. It just helps us to serve the kids better.

Newman et al. (2004) tended to agree with Rachel and Casey, they suggested additional counseling and mental health services through the hiring of more school counselors and social workers; they went a step further by suggesting after hiring these additional resources, define their roles between guidance functions and those who work on “psychological assessment or emotional development” (p. 295).

The pre-crisis awareness section focused on technical and emotional readiness, the referral process and suggestions or lessons learned in terms of school counselors’ preparation before a school rampage shooting. Limitations in terms of school counselors in this area have been discussed. The next section focuses on courses of actions taken and perceived expertness of school counselors during the crisis.

In-Crisis Protocol (ICP)

Finding Three: Steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting included taking, giving, and fulfilling directives, addressing personal deterrents from fulfilling directives, collaboration and awareness of professional support, and ensuring the emotional and

physical safety of others, primarily students. Lessons learned from this phase included school counselors assist in providing safety to everyone in their building population; however, their primary obligation is providing physical and emotional security to students and secondly the students' parents.

The in-crisis protocol phase centers on steps school counselors have engaged to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or assistance to others during a rampage school shooting. Themes that emerged from this section include directives, priorities, professional support, and safety. Each theme is addressed in this section.

Directives. School counselors at times processed with administrators, and at other times were given, fulfilled, and gave directives during the crisis. At the middle school, the fire alarm sounded and the middle school counselor headed “out the front of the building with all the personnel”. After hearing gunshots and seeing students injured, Rachel told school personnel, “‘there’s somebody shooting at our kids.’ I said ‘that’s, that’s what’s happening.’” Rachel also “told the secretary to call 911” (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Staff, 1998, p. 2A). Rachel continued by asking the secretary, “‘where uh [is the principal]?’ She said ‘She’s down the hall.’ So I ran and about that time we just met face to face and I said, ‘someone is shooting our kids.’”

According to Rachel, the middle school principal replied, “‘Uuuh, what do I do with the seventh grade, do we take them out?’ Or ‘what do we do with them? Do we ... What do we do?’” Rachel stated the principal, “made a split second decision just to get them all out of the building. And take them to the gym.” In Casey’s own words, after speaking with the middle school counselor, she said, “Get everybody in the gym. You know, get them out of the p-, parking lot area.” White, a middle school student at the time, stated everyone began telling them (the students) to “Run. Run to the gym. Run to the gym.”

Meanwhile, the elementary school counselors were given directives as soon as the administrators heard about the shooting. Administrators gave the school counselors a set of keys and told them to lock doors as the school was going into lockdown. Rhodes explained that “[Ruth] went to the front door” and “I [Rhodes] went to the second set”. Not long afterwards, “It came over on the intercom for the [school] counselors to go to the middle school ...” To place the situation in context, “At that point they didn’t know who was doing the shooting”, and they had not “caught the shooters” (Ruth). According to Shively, the two elementary school counselors also requested blankets from her,

Our two counselors [Ruth and Rhodes] came down and, um, said, ‘we need, um, we need blankets’ ... We had earthquake kits at that time. Cause, you know, it was supposed to be a big earthquake, so we had these large trash cans that had medical supplies and blankets and just all kinds of stuff, and, and I said, ‘Well, uh, my oldest daughter was a volleyball player, and we travel a lot, and I had a van, and so I had blankets and stuff in there’. And I actually had a first aid kit in there, too. And, um, so I said, ‘Let me run out to the van and get my blankets that I’ve got out there’, and we gathered some stuff up.

Eventually, Ruth walked toward the middle school and Rhodes rode on the back of a truck with supplies. Once Rhodes had got to the middle school, her principal “grabbed me and said, ‘You’ve got to go to the gym. That’s where all the kids are’”. Ruth and Rhodes met again in the gym to assist students.

Priorities. The initial priorities of school counselors were to follow the directives that were given to them, which was to assist and more specifically, assist the students. However, each had personal and/or emotional influences that shifted their priorities before fulfilling their mandates. Ruth actually walked beyond the gym to the middle school; she passed adults who were injured looking for children in need, “I remember passing by [teacher] and people who were working on her and asking you know ‘where are the students, where’s the rest of the students?’ And everybody was just we don’t know.” Soon she,

Walked into the middle school and it was when I got in the middle school I thought, 'Wait a second. I need to get myself together ... and get out of here. I don't know what's happened. And I don't know who's done this.' And I turned around and came back ... I didn't know if it was safe ... When I got in the building it was absolutely quiet and I thought, 'you've got to get to your ... You've got to be smart. Turn around and get out. I don't know, who has done this? I don't know where they are.'

Ruth came out of the middle school and "remember asking somebody else and they finally said they [students] were in the gym." When Ruth entered the gym first she began "looking for my son" who was a middle school student. She found her son, saw that he was "okay", and got "a hold of a phone in the gym [to] get a message to my husband ... [to pick] up my son and daughters" (one daughter at the elementary school and one in pre-school). Afterwards, she worked with Rhodes in assisting the children.

When Rhodes and the other individuals on the tailgate of the truck made it to the middle school, they "started carrying blankets to different people" (Shively). However, Rhodes' priorities soon changed,

When I realized how bad it was, when I turned ... and started down the sidewalk and saw everything. It went from trying to help to I've got to find my niece. And the thoughts that went through my head was how will I tell my brother ... If she is one of these bodies ...

Soon, Rhodes was receiving a directive from her principal to go to the gym. Rhodes, still concerned for her niece, responded to her principal, "And I just looked at her and said, '[niece's name].' And she said, 'She's fine. You've got to go to the gym.'" As Rhodes headed to the gym, she was still thinking of her niece, "And, I thought I'm not going to that gym ... If, [niece's name] not in there ... if [niece's name] not safe, I'll go in there but I'll come right back out here until I find her." Rhodes did enter the gym with her niece on her mind, "But when I walked in that gym I just, I just started scanning those kids ... looking for her." Not soon after, Rhodes found her niece and was ready to assist again, "Then I thought, okay, I, I can, I can work", now.

Then, she met Ruth who “was already in there” and they came up with a plan to assist the children.

According to Casey, the middle school principal, while adults were “herding” students into the gym, she was unable to locate Rachel, “I don’t really know where my counselor went”. Rachel went to the “end of the building” where the shooting had taken place. She “went down there to check on everything”. She saw “there were about seven or eight that [were] down. I stayed with one teacher who was hit by two bullets in her abdomen and upper chest area” (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Staff, 1998, p .11A). She waited until the “first ambulance arrived” and she informed them that the teacher was, “bad, she needs help right now”. Afterwards, Rachel decided that there were enough medical personnel to assist the injured; then she went to the gym and “stayed with the kids”.

Recommendations for school counselors in terms of priorities during a rampage school shooting were offered by some of the interviewees. Rachel stated “that the school counselor, her main duty [is to] see after her population”. Shively mentioned that school counselors “need to be available to the ... kids and the parents”. Gabby recommended, school counselors’ “first priority [has to] be the physical safety of the kids”. She goes on to say that school counselors’ “second priority [has to] be the emotional security of the kids”. Casey suggested that school counselors, first, “have to determine the safety of everybody”; she continues by adding that school counselors because they “know pretty much everybody” assist with connecting “parents” with their “kids”.

Professional support. While fulfilling directives and assisting others, school counselors received assistance from other professionals. When the recognition of the crisis was made aware to the elementary school administration, the administration instructed Ruth to lock a set of doors.

Ruth proceeded to lock the “front doors” (Rhodes). However, Ruth “had never used the key before”. To assist Ruth, “one of our janitors came” to help her “lock the door”.

Each of the school counselors referred to other adults helping with the physically harmed before law enforcement and ambulances with emergency medical technicians (EMTs) had arrived on the scene. According to Rachel, many of those individuals were “nurses on the grounds because they were doing scoliosis training” that day. She estimated “fifteen nurses on the ground” from a local university; also, “nurses from our other elementary, they had all come together from the junior high, they were all there in place” (Rachel). Rachel added that “lunchroom ladies with dish towels” were able “to make tourniquets” to stop the bleeding of some of the physically harmed. Because of the assistance from these professionals, school counselors were able to eventually focus on students.

Safety. Before and after law enforcement arrived, school counselors worked diligently to ensure physical and emotional safety. Interviewees explained ways school counselors ensured physical safety. For instance, Rachel ensured physical safety by staying with a physically harmed teacher until EMT arrived on the scene. According to Gabby, Ruth and Rhodes were keeping students safely “herded” in the gym. White insisted all three school counselors were “keeping” students safe in the gym. Rhodes made mention that students were aware the assailants had not been captured and feared “they would shoot through the building, or that they would come in ... to the building”; Rhodes assured students that the gym was safe. Rachel exclaimed that they also had to “account for the students”.

In respect to emotional safety, school counselors employed an overall strategy of reassuring students by hugging students, reaffirming they were safe, answering questions, sharing details, and encouraging peer group support. According to White, school counselors “all

through the gym were ... hugging ... and talking to us and trying to calm us down”; she added they were telling us “that everything was [going to] be okay”. Rachel reiterated this theme by saying she was doing all she could to “console the kids” and some she “would just hold them and they would cry”. Rhodes stated she began helping by hugging students, “I hugged, [and] just started hugging all of them”. Rhodes further explained that when she met Ruth in the gym, Ruth said, “look just go to who is screaming the loudest.” The school counselors “went from group to group” as “kids were screaming and crying” attempting to assure “them that they were safe” (Rhodes).

Students had “questions they wanted to ask”, and school counselors “would answer their questions the best we could” (Ruth). For instance, “one girl had asked me and said, ‘Miss [Ruth], you know, I saw [student name] and she got shot in the head. What happens when you get shot in the head?’” Ruth replied, “All I can tell you is that we have medical help here. People are helping ... we are doing the best we can”. In terms of answering questions and sharing details, Ruth asserts, “that you need to be honest”. She continues, “I don’t think you had to tell more details that aren’t necessary ... but you [respond] honestly”.

Rhodes gave specific details to students’ concerns. According to Rhodes, “And they immediately started telling me, “[student’s name] was shot ... [student’s name] was shot.” Rhodes responded with “Okay so it’s not ... a vital organ, she’ll be okay she was shot in the leg ... [student’s name] is going to be okay and, and we are.” However, after the crisis, Rhodes found out that the bullet actually did “hit an artery”. “Of course, I [Rhodes] didn’t know that” during the crisis. Rhodes continued, “she almost bled out ... they [family] were at the hospital all night long with them, not knowing if [student’s name] was going to make it ... she ... came very close to dying but didn’t”.

School counselors also encouraged peer support among students. According to White, when students entered the gym, they began “running to our friends ... in groups”. According to Ruth, “... so we’d sort of try to keep them in their groups ‘cause they were helping each other and talking to each other”. School counselors allowed opportunities for student peer support.

The in-crisis protocol focuses on ways school counselors have participated to assist in de-escalating the tragedy and offering safety or assistance to individuals during a rampage school shooting. Themes that emerged from this phase have been fully detailed including directives, priorities, professional support, and safety. The next phase, in-crisis awareness, details school counselors’ recognition or awareness in overcoming problems in working through a tragedy of a rampage school shooting.

In-Crisis Awareness (ICA)

Finding Four: School counselors’ perceived expertness in recognizing barriers during the rampage school shooting included self-awareness of the emotional effects of their professional persona on others, awareness of physical and emotional harm of others, awareness of the effect of rumors on crisis survivors and self, awareness and control of the personal aspect and internal emotions, and recognition of the need for professional support. Lessons learned from this phase included school counselors embodying the following perceived technical skills and qualities in helping others during the crisis: nurturing, calming, reassuring, being with you, and comforting.

The in-crisis awareness phase refers to school counselors’ awareness and ability in overcoming potential obstacles to handling the crisis of a rampage school shooting. Themes that arose from this phase include emotional states, challenges, professional support, and recommendations. The theme, emotional states, in this phase refers to school counselors’ emotional states and their awareness of other adults’ and students’ emotions. The theme,

challenges, refers to school counselors' identification of the unexpected. The theme, professional support, refers to school counselors' recognition of support needs. The theme, recommendations, refers to lessons learned from a parent's and a student's perspective for school counselors.

Emotional states. The theme, emotional states, describes adults', students', and school counselors' emotional states during the crisis. Interviews that mentioned emotional states of adults came to the same conclusion that adults were in shock: "I ran into the gym to check on what was going on in there, and I saw teachers in shock. Just standing there in shock." (Casey). Ruth spoke of body movements as well,

And there was a construction worker standing, hmm, before I got to the gym wringing his hands and saying, 'How could some of this happen and what ...' you know ... There were one or two, three teachers in there ... but they were actually pretty well in shock ... if that makes sense. I remember one of them just sitting and rocking. They were just sort of walking around and just they ... They weren't talking to the students. They were in shock themselves ...

Rhodes spoke about the teachers in the gym as well, "But the teachers were just like the kids. They were not necessarily crying but they were, they were sitting. Some of them were rocking. [Pause] Blank stares on their faces ..." Clifton as a parent found it difficult to fully grasp the situation as well, "I guess I was in some kind of denial ..."

Students experienced surreal emotions too until reality became clear. White gave some insight of what students were thinking at the onset of the crisis,

A lot of my classmates can still tell you that we all kind of thought maybe it was a skit or a play or something that ... Like, we thought, you know, maybe fireworks and ... fake blood and, you know, just kind of ... We, we honestly thought maybe it was like a skit and the teacher's kind of knew about it, but we didn't know about it ... Then I see my best friend laying there, and then I realize at that time, 'This has got to be real because they're telling us to actually run.'

Newman et al. (2004) quote a student saying that another student upon realizing the sudden danger was "screaming in fear" (p. 9). Interviewees, especially school counselors, tended

to agree: Rachel stated, students “were sobbing, some of them were screaming.” Rhodes said, students were “screaming and crying.” Ruth explained, students “were in shock ...” Ruth added that some students were asking questions out of fear saying,

‘Are those doors locked?’, ‘Can anybody get in the back door?’ you know, and that type of thing. So there was still danger. We didn’t ... We did not know at that point who did this ... where are they or are we still ... in danger?

Casey also offered specifics of what students were saying and doing, “kids screaming, yelling, ‘I want to call my mom, I want to call my dad, I need to get ahold of my parents.’” She continued, “They literally tore my jacket ... pulling on me ... they were, you know, so scared.” Shively explained how students reacted to flesh wounds,

And apparently it hit the concrete and so they were bleeding, but, you know, they were like, ‘Ms. Shannon I been shot’, but when I got over and looked at ‘em it was, I guess, fragments. You know, shrapnel, I guess, what you might say. It wasn’t actually, um, a, you know, gunshot. But they were all so terrified.

Ruth concluded that students “needed someone ... [especially] those students down there whose parents hadn’t been able to get to them ... they needed someone”, and the school counselors were there to help them.

School counselors worked through their emotions. According to Shively in respect to school counselors’ emotions during the crisis she stated, “They knew how to keep it together, and keep calm”. Gabby stated, the school counselors are “tough” ladies and they were the “right people for that situation”. However, school counselors at times didn’t feel tough. Rachel when she went outside after informing her principal of the shooting stated, “At that time I went back out and I was just like still just petrified”. Rhodes on the other hand described her emotions by giving a description of her view of the site, “Then I turned and walked down the sidewalk and my thoughts were, ‘I just walked into the gates of Hell.’” She went further saying that the number of emotional students was more than she had encountered before and she was not sure

“if I was doing the right thing ... or saying the right things ...” Ruth gave a more overall description of her emotions,

You see I’m, I’m one of these people that sometimes will ... And a lot of people are. You know you, you will handle it as long as the situation is there ... but then, then when you get home or whatever then that’s when you sort of crash.

School counselors worked with emotional adults and students. In addition, they were working through their own emotions. However, emotional states were not the only challenges presented to school counselors.

Challenges. School counselors faced challenges in terms of personal influences, rumors, and the physically harmed. Rhodes and Ruth, while attempting to fulfill directives, were aware they had relatives at the middle school. Rhodes was concerned for her niece and Ruth her son. It was not until they both realized their family members were okay that they were able to “focus on ... the students” (Ruth). Rumors were prevalent before and during the crisis. Clifton mentioned the following,

The teacher said well, because when she said we better go outside, that’s a fire drill, [Clifton’s child] said one of her classmates said [teacher’s name], ‘it was just Andrew [one of the assailants] pulling the fire drill, it’s just a prank’ and she said, ‘well, we probably should go outside anyway.’

The rumors continued during the crisis. Rhodes stated, “... The kids also started saying who it was.” Shively affirmed, “When I got to the gym the kids to-, started telling me, ‘Andrew and Mitchell [perpetrators] did this.’” Ruth added,

The main thing that sticks out to me from this and I really don’t know how to make it different but, um, whenever ... We were in the gym before the boys were caught. I had students telling me who had done it and they were right ... because they said they had told them they were going to ... and it wasn’t just one or two. It was several, so I knew before it was announced ...

Rachel talked about rumors referring to a teacher, who could have been shot,

Then someone comes out and gets [teacher] by the arms. And removes him. Cause they said the kids were saying ‘Go get [teacher] they’ll kill him, he’s on the hit list.’ These kids had supposedly seen a hit list and told nobody about it.

The idea that some students knew the assailants were planning this tragedy bothered the school counselors, especially Rachel, “That is the truth. They had heard them. The kids saying ‘Oh there’s going to be something [before the crisis] ...’” She reiterated, “The kids knew it and they did not tell anybody.”

School counselors came across many individuals who were harmed while attempting to fulfill their directives. For Ruth this was especially challenging because she “had never seen people that had been shot”. She continues, “The first thing I remember seeing is students that had been shot ... and there was a sidewalk here with a student here down, and there is another student here down.” Rhodes stated, “And I walked up and saw kids on the porch ... who were injured but not bad ... and I thought this is going to be okay ...” however, when Rhodes proceeded, she soon saw “bodies everywhere”. Rachel says, she

Started seeing the kids on the ground and, uh, the ones that first out of the hallway, right out of the hallway, uh, little [student’s name] was dead. You know, she was, she literally was, I mean, she was dead and there was another one, little [student’s name] was just screaming for her life.

The personal aspect and rumors affected school counselors during the crisis. Undoubtedly, seeing individuals that were harmed had an impact on school counselors attempting to provide assistance. Although these challenges presented themselves, school counselors continued to assist faculty and students, in part, because of their professional support.

Professional support. In referring to professional support, school counselors recognized the need for support. Ruth stated as a school counselor who was living the tragedy that she definitely needed some “outside help” and eventually assistance from “somebody that has not necessarily just gone through that ...” Rhodes agreed with Ruth that school counselors could

have used help, perhaps, “a counselor supervisor”; however, Rhodes saw having Ruth as beneficial during the crisis, “I think it gave me an advantage because [Ruth] and I were, because we had worked so well together. Rhodes continued,

I felt that was the one thing I felt more comfortable because I had [Ruth] there too. To where if there had been something that I didn’t feel like I could handle that day ... there was [Ruth] for me to turn back too.

Rachel discussed the importance of the nurses on the ground. She also stated Ruth and Rhodes were “helpful”. She affirmed that because of their working relationship together in the same building (elementary building) that “they could help one another” even after the tragedy.

Recommendations (or lessons learned). Recommendations for this phase are given from a parent’s and a student’s perspective. Recommendations include the following technical skills and qualities: nurturing quality, calming effect, the ability to reassure, and comforting. Clifton stated, “A lot of things that I think were beneficial as a counselor to me would have been because they are nurturing people ... And you know ... some people don’t have that ... I think that’s important.” Clifton also explained that in terms of responding to a rampage school shooting, effective school counselors “have that calming effect is good, like they had ... someone that is calming, that is trained as a counselor, you know, just to kind of keep everybody ...” Clifton added that effective school counselors are not only calming, but “reassuring” as well. They have the ability of being “with you” and letting you know “that you’re safe”. White stated similar ideas but she used the notion of being comforted,

Just to ... to be able to comfort them [students] and just to be there to listen to them and make sure to let them know, you know, things are gonna be okay and ... making sure that everything’s gonna be okay. Like, ‘We’re gonna take care of you,’ and just that feeling.

Data collected for the in-crisis awareness phase has been detailed. Themes included emotional states, challenges, professional support, and recommendations. The next section

addresses school counselors assisting the school system and crisis survivors in managing the effects of the crisis, post-crisis.

Post-Crisis Recovery (PCR)

Finding Five: Steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included taking and fulfilling directives, collaborating and requesting professional support, participating in group debriefings, being available to parents and students, being a peer support for faculty, providing reassurance and emotional safety, and utilizing the following strategies: listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals. Lessons learned from this phase included school counselors' willingness to perform various tasks or role flexibility.

The post-crisis recovery phase describes school counselors aiding survivors of the rampage school shooting and helping them to manage the effects of the tragedy. Themes that emerged from this phase include directives, professional support, availability, and goals and strategies. The theme, directives, refers to directions given to school counselors during the immediate aftermath of the crisis. The theme, professional support, relates to outside professional helpers assisting with counseling services during the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. The theme, availability, refers to school counselors' and counseling services' availability for assisting crisis survivors during the immediate aftermath and the aftermath of the tragedy. The theme, goals and strategies, centers on school counselors' and counseling services' methods and aims to assist crisis survivors during the immediate aftermath and the aftermath of the tragedy.

Directives. School counselors continued assisting students and parents after law enforcement made the announcement that the assailants had been "captured" and families had

left the scene (Rhodes). According to Rhodes, “there [were] some kids who still wanted to talk ... even after parents picked them up some of them started coming back with kids” and school counselors would speak with them, “reassure” them and let them “tell what they saw, what they felt at that point”. After families finally left, school counselors received more directives.

According to Rachel,

By that time, by the time the afternoon rolled around ... Mrs. [Casey] said ‘We’ve got to be back out here tonight because Governor Huckabee is going to be here and we’re going to have to talk with them and meet with them.’ And she said ‘We’ve got to deal with all our books and lockers and all that stuff.’

School counselors eventually left the school and returned later. When Ruth returned she continued counseling “people that came in. Some of them came just because they felt the need to do so.” When Rhodes returned she asked law enforcement “Well what do you need me to do?” And they said, “I need you to answer the phone”. Rhodes continued, “And I sat there until we got ready to do our meeting, answering the phone and, and literally news reports were calling from all over the world”. The officer directed Rhodes to say, “we have no comment” to news reporters (Rhodes).

It was not too long before the three school counselors sat in a meeting devised to decide what the district would do next. However, Rachel left the meeting because her principal stated, “I need you to come help me go through their lockers and their belongings and we got all that out” (Rachel). Rachel described the need for searching through lockers and the students’ belongings.

The sheriff wants all that stuff, see the state police was going to start investigation and all that, so we had to get everything out of the lockers and assess all that ... Mrs. [Casey] and I did. And [we] looked at the books and made sure there wasn’t anything that, you know, any kind of thing that was unusual to a seventh, a sixth and seventh grade boy’s locker, you know, basically. And then we had to hand it over to the, to the law enforcement.

During the immediate aftermath of the crisis, school counselors received more directives. Those directives included continued assistance of students and parents, coming back to the school to assist, answering phone calls, attending a meeting, and assessing student lockers and belongings. Although school counselors were performing needed tasks, they also received professional support in performing counseling services.

Professional support. According to Fox et al. (2003), “The evening of the shooting, school officials invited counselors from throughout the community into the school gymnasium to meet with students, parents, and others who needed counseling” (p. 122). Those school officials included a school psychologist who was assigned by the superintendent to manage the crisis. Said school psychologist assigned another school psychologist, Mrs. Blanche Gabby to manage all of the counselors, including invited counselors. Gabby and “the Calvary [assigned crisis management team]” arrived on the scene during the immediate aftermath of the tragedy. The recently assigned crisis management team assisted school counselors by “You know, it was ‘We can turn this over to somebody else.’” Gabby saw the relief from the school counselors and put it in the following words, “[Rhodes] them ... at that time, it was like they [school counselors] could take their breath for the first time and they collapsed ... which is absolutely appropriate and natural”. Gabby became the counseling leader. According to Fugate (1998),

[Blanche Gabby] of Jonesboro, a school psychologist, said a crisis counseling center has been established in the school gymnasium ‘and we will be here all night ... we are working two-hour shifts. We will be here to help the students, parents, and the teachers,’ Mrs. [Gabby] said (p. 3A). ‘We have school counselors coming from all over Northeast Arkansas, school psychologists, area mental health personnel and a number of chaplains,’ Mrs. [Gabby] said (p. 3A).

Gabby described it this way,

I did the crisis counseling center and basically just did ... I didn’t know at the time the term, I truly believe it was in God’s hands giving us the knowledge to do what we needed to do, but we started doing psychological triage.

Gabby elaborated on her role,

[Later that] afternoon these parents were coming back with their kids. So it was just a matter of trying to figure out the level of their trauma ... and hook them up with the right counselor. Like for instance, if I knew that one of the independent practitioners was a family counselor ... when families would come in and want to stay together ... [and] especially little sixth grade girls. They'd go in herds. You know how they go. You go to the bathroom together. You sit together. And trying to get people who understood that ...

Gabby summed up her role as a "logistical" person. Gabby added that what assisted her in this role was

Being a small town ... at that time, I had a personal relationship with most of the school counselors ... and many of the independent practitioners as well as the [local counseling agency] people. And um, try to just decide what they needed.

Rhodes confirmed, "Parents and people were coming into the gym; they were offering counseling services there ... [and Blanche Gabby] ... that group [management team] was sort of coordinating it". Ruth stated

[Blanche Gabby] was assigned some of the big ... The leader or whatever ... they [management team] did help a lot. They'd say, 'we need to do this and we need to, you know, de- debrief the kids. We need to have ...' So that helped a lot so-

Gabby also exclaimed that school counselors from a neighboring district came to help and she was relieved to see them,

I can remember being in the gym with the kids and one of the police officers came down and said, 'We've got some school counselors here, but we're not letting them in until y'all give us the okay.' And I never felt so relieved, to look up and see [them].

Gabby gave an example of how school counselors assisted,

And they actually did things, like um, they said, 'What do you want us to do?' And one of our concerns was for a young man who was autistic- And his mother ... And I said [mother's name] just took [son's name] home and she started calling me and she doesn't know what to do ... What to tell him... So those counselors went to that. They picked up, I think, her bloody keys because...you have to remember everything was a crime scene. They got her keys and did some stuff with the house and took care of that situation ...

Gabby because of her experiences with school counselors in this crisis situation also suggested the following recommendations for school counselors, who may experience a rampage school shooting,

I think the important thing there is, since you're dealing with school, the school counselor part of it that it would be the same thing for anybody who's going into that kind of situation to be prepared for. You have to be prepared to play any role that you need to be. You need to leave your ... I don't care if you have a doctorate. I don't care if you were Albert Einstein ... or an NBA basketball player. You show up on the campus or wherever something happens, you have to be willing to do the most humble job.

Ruth spoke about others who assisted with counseling services, "but ... they also ended up to other mental health professionals and there were volunteers that came and they helped with the debriefing and helped with answering the parents and they had work, working with the kids". One of the members of the assigned management team gave more specific details, she stated, "some 50 mental health personnel from Mid-South Health Systems, St. Bernard's Behavioral Health, Charter Lakeside and private practitioners, counselors from Arkansas State University, school counselors, school psychologists, social workers, and ministers attended the briefing" (Fugate, 1998, p. 3A) to discuss handling counseling services for the school and community. Ruth describes the meeting and conclusions,

But there were quite a few, and then there was a big meeting in the cafeteria with community counselors and mental health professionals and it was like a big discussion about what do we do now so ... and, um, at that meeting I remember N.O.V.A. [National Organization for Victim Assistance] had called I don't know if you are familiar ... that's a, a sort of volunteer, um, crisis group that would come. Anyway, they ... It was decided that N.O.V.A. would come in and help with some of the debriefing and help with meeting the students.

Rhodes remembers the district superintendent asking school counselors specifically, "And, um, Mr. Cooper our superintendent looked at us and he said, 'What do you all want?' The school counselors, and we, we, they had told us about N.O.V.A. and we said, 'We want

N.O.V.A. to come.” The availability and longevity of counseling services provided are detailed next.

Availability. According to archival records or email correspondence, the Executive Director of the National Association of School Psychologists (N.A.S.P.) contacted the assigned school crisis manager at the time. The Executive Director of N.A.S.P. encouraged the crisis manager to obtain approval from the appropriate school authority in seeking assistance from N.O.V.A.; the Executive Director spelled out what N.O.V.A. would be able to provide:

Second response counseling in crisis intervention [which includes] safety and security, ventilation and validation, prediction (of future events) and preparation, reduce acute stress caused by trauma [influenced by] restoring the dominance of cognitive functioning over emotional reactions, facilitating the restoration of community and social connection, seeks to restore or enhance adaptive capacities by providing education on future expectations [, and] opportunities for survivors to interpret the trauma event (p. 1).

According to Fugate (1998), writer for a local newspaper, after the meeting the night of the crisis,

The Westside School District, in cooperation with the governor’s office and attorney general’s office has requested that the National Organization for Victims Assistance send a crisis team to the district. The four-member team is expected to arrive by 5 this afternoon. The middle school office would remain open all night with counselors available around the clock ... The faculty will return at 8 this morning for on-site counseling in the gym. Area school counselors have been asked to stay at their schools to help counsel any of their own students. Westside students will return to the campus on Thursday for ‘ongoing counseling, both group and individual’ (p. 3A).

According to Clifton, parent and elementary school teacher aide, when the faculty returned or got “back together, we had counseling sessions like I remember being in the old art room”. However, students returned later. Newman et al. (2004) explained that a couple of days after the incident, students were allowed to return to school; counselors and other helpers were stationed in each classroom to “explain what happened and why they were there, and to open up a conversation about how the students were feeling” (p. 125). Counseling specialists were

stationed in the school's media rooms, available for students with overwhelming emotional distress. The specialists offered their services for the remainder of the week and counselors were readily available to enter classrooms as necessary. All in all, counseling opportunities were offered for students, faculty and staff, and law enforcement.

White, middle school student at the time, explains what that day was like, We didn't do anything. Like, we had a lot of counseling, um, going on. We had groups and we would talk to ... Our, our counselors [school counselors] would talk to us all and either, you know, we'd go to the gym. We'd go into the, um, into like the meeting rooms or anywhere we could just to talk to them. We would have group meetings though with the counselors and sessions like, you know, talking about what happened and how it's gonna be better. I mean, all kinds of stuff like that.

Not only did school counselors meet with students in groups, but Rachel also had an open door policy; in her words, "My office was open for kids to come into for me to help them, just to be with them, and that's all they wanted". Gabby explained that parents also had a tough time and so, there were places set up for parents when they arrived, if needed,

And most of them [parents] had to stop for a minute and collect themselves. And of course we had the, we had a set-up place where if the parents wanted to park their cars and stay that day ... away from the kids so the kids could be back to their new normal ...

Ruth stated that at the elementary school, students would "get upset" and "then we would come and work with them"; she continued saying there were "kids that the parents might get upset or they might hear something and get upset ..." and the school counselors would "work with" them. Rachel stated that at the middle school, counseling continued with students "until I went home ... I went home two weeks before school was out ... [and I] set the kids up in counseling with other agencies". Newman et al. (2004) also stated that during the immediate aftermath, schools provided counseling services; however, the extended counseling needs were responsibilities placed upon each person and their families. Newman et al. (2004) added that schools attempted to offer referrals and "be sympathetic to children's needs" (p. 274); also "the

Arkansas Crime Victims' Reparations Board provided for additional counseling services for six months" (p. 276).

Goals and strategies. The goals and strategies for outside counselors were made clear to outside helpers. Although not done initially, Gabby and her team eventually screened or "cleared" outside counselors in assisting with counseling services (Casey). Outside counselors were expected to help crisis survivors with "processing through" what had taken place through strategies such as "writing down things" and allowing individuals to "tell their stories" (Rhodes).

School counselors' goals and strategies included being a peer support for faculty, providing reassurance and emotional safety. They used strategies such as listening skills, consoling, employing genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals to assist others. Data supporting these strategies have been detailed.

School counselors relied on basic skills such as listening during and immediately after the crisis. For instance, some teachers seemed to just want someone to listen to them during the immediate aftermath of the crisis,

They were mainly telling details of things they had seen, asking ... I remember ... One of the things I remember is, uh, one of the teachers asking me if I had seen [teacher's name]. She said [teacher's name] came out ... I think she knew that she [teacher's name] had been shot. Another teacher I remember right when I was leaving had said, 'Look,' and she held up a purse and her [purse] had been shot, um, and that she had been ... come that close to being shot ... [They were] pretty well in shock and mainly just wanted, just wanted someone to listen to them.

After the day and night of the crisis was over, counselors came up with more ways to assist others. Outside counselors debriefed faculty and staff in the Westside Consolidated School District without the students present. Faculty and staff were divided into groups by grade configuration and by grade level. Although Rhodes was part of the elementary grade configuration, she felt that "those of us that had been down there and seen that, we were thrown

in with all these other people who had been up here ... not knowing everything that was going on ... but we shouldn't have been with them". Instead Rhodes decided to go to a group in which she could provide peer support for individuals she witnessed needed additional help, "the teacher ... who died. I went to the session where her two best friends were. Thinking I need to be there for them. And I really did need to be there for them".

When students arrived back to school, counselors were available to not only assist them but also their parents. Shively claimed,

Our counselors [elementary school counselors] spent a lot of time just, um, talking to the parents, reassuring them you can trust us, our, you know, our building's gonna be locked down. Um, get your kids back to school. We want 'em to come back the next day. You know, they went around and did counseling meetings with the kids, just reassuring the kids that we're gonna do the best we can. We want this to be a safe place for you.

Ruth stated she would "listen" and try to "help" parents; she exclaimed,

A lot of times they just wanted to make sure their child was, was safe. They just want to be reassured that we would do what we'd do to make sure they were safe, and sometimes they just needed to talk.

Rachel, the middle school counselor, was helping parents to deal with their children, who were emotionally impacted from the crisis as well,

I told them, I said 'You know, it's not going to be an easy short fix here. You're going to have to be patient.' And encouraging, and loving, and eventually I feel like, you know they will do better and then ... we get them more help and more counseling.

Ruth stated in dealing with students that some elementary students were not sure of what took place and would ask her questions about the crisis and their safety based on what they heard. She gave an example of how she would respond,

You know, 'Yes, it happened.' 'It was a very sad thing but we are doing our best to keep you safe,' and, and that [was] usually it ... That usually seems to reassure them that, you know, uh, we will talk about all the things we'll do to keep you safe.

Ruth decided to talk about safety with students through guidance lessons with classes as a response to students' concerns for safety,

There are some chicken soup story books and, um, there was one about the school and how they all sort of helped each other and they worked together to make it the best school. Well I think I read that story and we talked about things we could do to make our school better and, and, and sort of try to take it on a positive side that we could- make a difference, and that seemed to work pretty well for the students ... and that type of thing, but trying to sort of go in and, and talk about we can make a difference in our school- and how we wanted to be the best we could and things we could do to make it, you know, safe and, and that type of thing. Even as students now they can make a difference.

School counselors also were consolers and comforters. According to Clifton, Ruth was a comforter for her after the tragedy, "and it had been a struggle so I was real clingy to Mrs. [Ruth]. Yeah, she was my go-to person ... My sense of comfort ... I felt safe." Rachel stated she would "console them [students]", and provide things for them "to hold" from donations; she explained,

Sixth and seventh grade. Everybody got something. But the kids like, they are hands on, they wanted to have something, you know, they could kind of hold too and, and just, you know, cuddle, whatever. So that, I would have that provided for them if they wanted to hold something. The girls especially ...

Regarding counseling students, Newman et al. (2004) make clear that placing children with people with whom they have a relationship, such as school counselors, "is critical" (p. 275); having a relationships with students, parents, faculty, survivors of the crisis, assisted school counselors in expressing genuineness and trust with others. Gabby tells a story of the middle school counselor greeting parents and students the day they returned to school,

One of the most vivid memories for me was um, on Thursday, when the kids came back to school. Of course, you know, we were there from 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning. And I remember looking across the campus and I thought, 'No parent will bring their kid back to school today.' And um, standing in front of the middle school, [Mary Rachel] and [Dixie Casey], parents dropping their kids off and [Rachel] crying, tears running down her face, but saying a kind word to each parent ...

Gabby continues by explaining the importance of having the middle school counselor and principal there to greet parents,

But I just think if they ... if there had been anybody else but their school counselor and their principal at the front of that that building to greet them this way ... that morning, I don't think we would have had a 95 percent attendance rate during that period.

White explained that students trusted school counselors because, “you felt like, ‘Okay. They have helped me before. They’re gonna help me in this.’” Clifton stated similar sentiments. She exclaimed that because the relationships established by school counselors, she knew she could “count” on “them” not only for herself, but also for her middle school daughter because she “always had a really good relationship with Mrs. [Rachel]”. Rachel summed it up best in respect to genuineness and trust, “But, I think a good counselor that really is a genuine, uh transparent person for that child to look at and say I, I trust you ... you’re going to be able to help me.”

Rachel asserted that she utilized play therapy with students during group sessions to build rapport as well,

When I did the different, uh, the little group guidance sessions that I did with all the, uh, different, uh, stories and puppets and things ... that I did, interactions, you know, I did that with kids so you building rapport and trust with kids and I did a lot of, uh, ... And I just learned this from other counselors I did a lot of play therapy with kids. Where especially kids in small groups and kids that had real issues, I did play therapy with them ...

Lastly, during the team crisis management meeting from the night of the crisis, it was decided that schools would “get a referral list to parents” (Gabby). Often, referrals went through the school counselors. Therefore, school counselors offered referrals for those experiencing “frequent”, “bigger issues” (Ruth).

The post-crisis recovery phase detailed school counselors assisting survivors of a rampage school shooting and helping them to manage the effects of the crisis. Themes that

emerged from this phase include directives, professional support, availability, and goals and strategies. The next section describes school counselors' awareness of barriers to recovery for others as well as self.

Post-crisis Awareness (PoCA)

Finding Six: School counselors' perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included awareness and identification of the long-term impact on students, parents, teachers, and self, requests for additional assistance for student school counseling services, availability to teachers, developed strategy to address unwilling clients, obtained additional crisis training, and reflected on additional training effectiveness for such a crisis. Lessons learned included return to normal routine soon, do not invite crisis survivors back to site the night of the crisis, control the media, employ a screening process for outside counselors, group facilitators redirect people when necessary, include school counselors in the debriefing process.

The post-crisis awareness phase details school counselors' self-care and help with others in recognizing and working through obstacles to the recovery process. Themes that emerged from this phase include peer professional challenges, media and traffic challenges, students' and teachers' challenges, school counselors' challenges, and recommendations. Data supporting these themes have been provided.

Peer professional challenges. Although school counselors and the school district were thankful that outside counselors and helpers were available and present to assist, school counselors, leaders, and other crisis survivors became increasingly aware that these helpers also presented obstacles to the recovery process. As volunteers were coming in to the crisis site, Casey reported, "all of [a] sudden, everybody becomes counselors. All of a sudden everybody

wants to cash in on their expertise.” Ruth added, “There was some that were here to maybe make a name for themselves”. Rhodes explained,

And a lot of people wanted to be able to put it on their resume. I’ve heard people talk about, ‘Oh I was there, I worked on that’ and I’m thinking, no you weren’t. If you were there you weren’t there long.

Rhodes continued by inferring that credentials were not checked effectively, “people were walking around, um, handing out their business cards, um, you know, ‘Come see me’ ... I don’t think credentials were checked well enough.” Rhodes proceeded by giving an example,

The counselor that was from some outside agency and I do not know who, where. He started in, ah, sort of like you do with N.O.V.A., tell me about what happened, you know ... and nobody said anything. They just, all these, it was second and third grade teachers and nobody said anything. And, um, finally he said, ‘Well, I’ll just tell you what I thought, what I heard about it.’ And he said, ‘I am new to the area, I hear about this shooting, it doesn’t mean anything to me.’ Again there are two teachers, her two best friends are breaking down and just screaming ... and crying, you know ... He just said, ‘This means nothing to me.’ And hear that oh they, they get hysterical ... it was all I could do, to not say, ‘Please leave.’ ... But I thought I can’t do that, I need ... to console these two ladies.

Rachel stated, “Now, we had other people in there, psychiatrist with credentials that were great, and some that were real Looney-tunes”. Ruth exclaimed that not only were they Looney but bossy,

I think we had maybe too many people willing to be the boss. Get rid of some people ... I, I remember in the big committee meet- um, community meeting where they were talking about, you know, what’s the best direction to go instead of asking this what, what did your school want and I’m like it is sort of, ‘This is what we’re going to do,’ and it ... So too many personalities and too many people wanting to maybe make a name for themselves... Yeah, and all of them was telling, ‘This is what you need to do ...’ ... So with that, that was a bit of a problem.

Rachel stated that as a solution, some of the issues presented by volunteers and fellow outside counselors, “we had to go through those and decide, you go, [and] you stay ...” Casey added, “After a little we caught on ... [Gabby] started, um, making sure nobody came in, and

helped us during those couple of weeks that we had extra counselors, unless they were truly certified people.” Gabby confirmed,

And it took massive, massive manpower to get those people either off campus or in the right place to help. Rather than just standing round and getting in the way, which, you know, you have to weed through. There were some people that did not need to be there.

Media and traffic challenges. “We were clueless about having to deal with the media ... we didn’t have enough sense to close the campus to the media” (Gabby). The media “flooded” schools with attempts to gain information and interviews (Newman et al., 2004, p. 273); this made it difficult for school, law enforcement, and emergency personnel to do their jobs, as they were often busy trying to “restrain the media” (p. 273).

The media made parking and traffic flow to and from the school challenging. Ruth stated, The next day, I think it was the next day; there were so many vans and media news trucks and all that stuff that we couldn’t park on our elementary parking lot. It was all ... It was covered with those. We had to park at the high school and I think the bus terminal ...

Rhodes confirmed, “Before the end of the school day, that day ... This elementary parking lot was covered with trucks.” She continued, “I mean it was just, they were parked all over the parking lot, in the grass, everywhere.” Ruth added, “When the shooting happened, when parents started coming, the road was so blocked that it was, you had to park, people had parked all the way down.” Clifton stated, “It was just a sea of reporters ... because you could not get out, you could not. I mean, traffic, it was hours.” Shively exclaimed,

By the time I got back to the campus, elementary campus, which I parked my bus on the elementary campus, um, and there were helicopters, there were three helicopters in the field. Uh, every news media, the vans with the big satellites were on the campus so bad that I had to honk my horn to get ‘em to move.

Gabby explained how people worked through the blocked parking lot and traffic,

Where the other chaos was getting up the school because there was a major traffic jam on that little two-lane highway, if you noticed how narrow that little highway is up to the school. Well, people had to just stop in their cars and walk up to the school and they were

going ... Some people had four wheelers and what have you and were going down ditches and getting there to get to their kids.

White described seeing similar actions,

My brother's friend got me and then took me to my dad and brother, like, we were driving off and it was so slow, the traffic flow and everything and people trying to get up here. There was actually people walking from that intersection, running, not walking, running to get to the school because traffic wasn't moving.

Ruth stated law enforcement provided assistance, "because there was so many tower trucks out here and they had to get, again, the police had to come out, the sheriff's department ..." However, law enforcement actions did not stop the media from intruding into counseling services. Gabby provided the following description, "CNN and helicopters were already flying over the school. In no time the news media were like vultures on us. And they stayed there for too long." Shameer, Werner, and Slivka stated, "Network television crews swarmed amid the children and parents trying to make their way into Westside Middle School for counseling sessions Wednesday" (6A). Ruth exclaimed some of the media's strategies, "And they would, um, park alongside the road and ... kids and then they saw the news media, got in the woods and tried to film the kids ..."

Representatives of the media attempted several tactics in an effort to get information. Casey made mention of this point, "And then there were those people that just wanted to see what they could find out, you know, and just prey on those people and get their stories." Gabby stated, "So all of this [counseling services] was done with helicopters spotlighting crying kids. And then the media rushing to wherever [the] kids [were] ..." Rachel stated addressing the media's tactics was necessary, "But the media, you know, they're wanting a story. And they're [planning] to get [it]. So we had to deal with that." According to Shameer, Werner, and Slivka, "Reporters stuck microphones and cameras in front of anyone who looked like they might talk,

while Craighead County sheriff's deputies cleared a path into the building" (6A). The authors provided an example,

A father went into a counseling session with his two sons at the school cafeteria. When he came out, he consented to speak with a reporter ... Within moments, 15 television cameras, several still photographers and countless microphones and tape recorders surrounded the family. Reporters shouted questions at the man until he covered his sons' heads with his hands and began walking away, surrounded front and back by cameras and microphones and shouted questions (p. 6A).

Shively reported, "One of the media slipped in with us and was sitting a couple rows down from us, you know, and uh listening to our conversations ..." Ruth claimed that some reporters "tried to impersonate counselors that were here to help". Rhodes said something similar, "the media" pretended "to be a family member or something" and "got into a counseling session, [and] tape recorded it ..." however, Ruth stated, "someone had figured it out and he had to turn over all his notes and his recording and that type of thing". Rhodes stated before law enforcement was able to confiscate the notes and recording, "they had to get a warrant". Gabby admonished they had to get "rid of some of the bad after some bad deals". Shameer, Werner, and Slivka elaborated on the school's decision to address the media,

The media frenzy prompted the Westside School board Wednesday to bar media representatives from the campus beginning at 3 p.m. and restrict access to all school employees until Tuesday. Superintendent Grover Cooper may extend the ban if he deems necessary (6A) ... The media's quest for 'real life' witnesses—those who were in the schoolyard at the time of the Tuesday afternoon shootings that killed five people injured 10—has occasionally bordered on the crazed (p. 6A).

Problems with the media also consisted of the reporting of misinformation. From Clifton's perspective, "there was so much misinformation out there ... and I don't know how to say this without it sounding ugly, but there were so many people doing things to get attention, that had no business ..." Rachel gave an example,

The same little boy that came and told me that [that Andrew stated he was going to harm himself], he had a change of story because he told his father ... that Andrew said, 'That

he was going to come to school and kill a bunch of people' but the little boy didn't tell me that. But the father then started telling everybody that the school counselor knew about the shooting and did nothing about it. They sold my picture out of the annual to one of these TV shows ...

Rachel stated that not only did people misinform the media, but also the media misinformed the public "without following up". Rachel stated the media "ran with" the story the father sold and it was all over national news that "[Mary Rachel], school counselor, knew about the shooting and did nothing about it". Eventually, Rachel was able to express her side of the story in so doing, "it was a weight off my shoulders". She shared with the reporter as long as the reporter told the story exactly as she quoted,

And he [reporter] said uh, 'I'll tell the truth.' And I said 'Okay, I'm going to take you at your word. If you'll tell the truth, I am going to tell you the story and I want it printed just like I'm telling you.' So I went through the whole story, and told him, that a child had come to me and had said. I didn't mention names or anything like that. And I said uh if you'll print that story then that [would] be great. And do you know, the next morning it was in the paper, and Jonesboro Sun printed it just like I told it.

Students and teachers' challenges. Students and teachers' faced challenges in regard to counseling services, recovery and returning to some kind of normalcy. Needless to say, counselor services were needed. Students' and teachers' challenges have been detailed in the following section.

Students. Ruth shared reasons why students at the elementary school were affected, And you got to realize some of the students rode the bus with the boys. So those, I think, may have been some ... Some of the students were, uh, related to the girls that were shot or some of the students that were shot ... so we're, we're a small community.

Rachel discussed the emotional state of the students at the middle school as they were returning to school that fall,

And you know, it's just one of those things, that it's kind of like any kind of an emotional upset that you have. Kids moving or children of divorce, or whatever, they ... Their little world is shattered that they've been comfortable sitting in and now it's all toppled over.

Rachel continued by describing the climate of the school, "it was actually like a hospital.

Our, our school was kind of like a hospital when they all came back." She added,

The least little thing would set them off and then they may spend half a day in my office and then that was just like a domino effect, I may have one the next ... or I may have fifteen, I told my principal I had to have some help; so, we were ugh, given a social worker and resource officer.

Newman et al. (2004) stated that some counselors believed this cohort of students are "suffering problems to a great extent" (p. 126). Teachers have stated that

They have found behavioral and academic problems in their students they believed are related to the shooting ... some students were still scared and were reminded of the shooting whenever they heard a fire alarm or other loud noise, like a locker door slamming (p. 126).

Newman et al. (2004) reported more signs of post-trauma among students; in fact, the authors state students reported they were unable to sleep after dark and little noises "set them off" (p. 223). Rachel confirmed these signs as the students' troubles made it difficult for students to return to a sense of normalcy,

And then of course, you know, over the summer kids, you know, they have activities, they get, of course most of those kids that were so badly, I say badly, uh, affected by all the, they were all affected. But the ones that were, that went out on that end where the shooting actually took place were in worse condition than the ones that went out the other end and didn't see and experience what these kids experienced. But they weren't ... they did not want to sleep in their room by themselves. I mean they were scared to go down the hall by themselves. It was just the, the, the horror that they had was just it was just horrible ... And parents would call me. And they ... we don't know when we are going to get our kids to even get back in their own beds. They wouldn't sleep by themselves.

Rachel gave a more specific example of how the impact of the crisis affected the students' daily school activities,

I didn't stay out of the class very long at all, I went right ... I started right in and, uh, one particular day was, it was a terrible day. We were in the library doing something with the

group guidance and a lot of kids suffered from ... post-trauma. And our custodian was outside weed eating, or had some kind of motor thing going. And it, one of the little girls that was really on the critical list for a while, she was still on crutches, started having a post-trauma uh experience and it was just, it was horrible. The kids then just all kind of collapsed on me and we had to, uh you know, I had to leave the class and take her. And had to go and get her back, settled back down from having that meltdown. And that happened more than once.

Rachel gave another example that took place not too long after the crisis,

The fire department actually came in and did a fire drill and pulled the fire alarms. About two days before we went home for summer break. And that was against Mrs. [Casey's] orders. [She] said 'You can come and do a fire drill but you're not going to pull the fire alarms.' And they did anyway ... And you cannot imagine what that was like. Kids were screaming, running, holding their little heads. And boy did the fire chief look dazed. Mrs. [Casey] said 'I told you, we didn't need to pull the fire alarms.' It was awful.

Rachel also gave an example of the long-term impact on students,

For years, I heard um, 3 years ago, 3 or 4 years ago, uh one of the kids, about that time, was in college, maybe working on her Master's Degree. Sitting in the cafeteria at one of the colleges and a tray dropped. Loud bang. She lost it. Completely lost it. It took her right back to the day of the shooting.

Without a doubt, students were in need of counseling services; however, not all students were pleased with outside counselors. According to Clifton, her daughter "had the same opportunity, you know, to be in those small groups ... [But] I don't know that she spoke ..."

Rachel explained,

They didn't want anybody else but me. They wanted somebody they knew and that's something that I think ... See these kids were facing people they had never seen and they're just sixth graders. They're seventh graders, they're just little kids. So it was hard for them.

However, Clifton eventually had her daughter see an outside counselor away from the school campus, but she found that "it wasn't totally bad but it just seemed like it started to do more harm than good". Clifton provided an explanation, "... I finally just pulled her [daughter] out ... because we did not get along ... she [outside counselor] was a non-Christian ... she told [daughter's name] that it was okay to sleep around, that she didn't see anything wrong with that".

However, Clifton questioned herself, "... I didn't see a lot of good. I mean, in hindsight, I might should have left her there but I didn't".

Clifton was not alone in her sentiments regarding counselors doing "more harm", according to Newman et al. (2004), survivors and the community were divided, some individuals thought it was important to move on from the crisis by not dwelling on it while others felt they needed to continue to talk about it. Parents were fearful that counseling "will do their children more harm than good" (p. 224); these parents wanted their children to avoid any kind of counseling so as not to relive the experience.

Some students seem to have the same sentiments as parents. Students were invited to Ferncliff summer camp in another part of the state to get away from the familiarity of the crisis site; however, some parents eventually pulled their children from there as well. Newman et al. (2004) insist that Ferncliff, the camp for grieving students, invited the 89 students who walked through the exit doors open to the gunfire on the day of the crisis, the summer after the incident, 68 students attended; however, the next time the camp was offered only 20 students attended. It is assumed that the number of students declined because their peers mocked students who attended the camp after the first time.

Rhodes agreed that the lack of attention to the counseling needs for students had a long-term impact. She gave an example, "And, um, there was one who was hired as, um, a teacher's aide here a few years ago. And she had a lot of issues and it, it went back to the fact that she never went through ... any counseling or therapy." Clifton adds that her daughter, "still will not talk about it to this day ... she has issues of repressing whatever happened". Counselors explained that at the crux of the issue of receiving or not receiving counseling or long-term counseling came down to "denial and survival guilt" (Newman et al., 2004, p. 217).

Although students were apprehensive in responding to outside counselors, some students reacted the same way to school counselors,

The boys didn't really come in and talk as much as the girls. I thought that was interesting too. But that's kind of true too lots of time ... Now not all of them. Because we had some injured boys in the shooting and, uh, but it was mainly the girls (Rachel).

Ruth explained how the school counselors dealt with unwilling clients at the elementary school,

We didn't force them. We might go back later and see if they're willing to talk, checking in with them. But no ... Or we might try to make arrangements, you know, to have one of them talk to somebody else or whatever ... And then we'd probably go back and check on them again-

Teachers. Teachers were impacted by the tragedy at the elementary and middle school. They were in need of counseling services, but perceptions of counseling kept some from receiving assistance. Rhodes discussed how teachers at the elementary school were impacted,

I don't know that the middle school ever realized how big of an impact it had on the elementary [school] ... You can literally walk to ... And especially those of us and not that I want, you know, especially those of us who were there working that scene. But even just, just teachers in general who, even if they weren't down there ... and didn't see all of that they had those children and they knew those children well ... You knew them well, you knew those kids ...

Shively stated teachers at the elementary school were concerned about their own kids as well,

But those people that were, they had been panicked because so many of them didn't know what was going on. All they knew was the building was being locked down. A lot of them had kids at the middle school. They couldn't leave their classroom to go take care of, find their own children.

Ruth added that faculty at the elementary school had worked not only with the students but with the injured teacher,

Some of the teachers were impacted because well we had a lot of those students come through our, our school, and [deceased teacher's name] worked at this building. So we're ... We were all impacted in, in lots of ways.

Although teachers' were impacted by the tragedy and in need of counseling services, there were conflicting views regarding debriefing and counseling services. According to Casey, a day after the shooting, counselors had two debriefings with teachers, one in the morning and one in the afternoon; however, "my teachers, they weren't ready for that ... before that their friends were killed. Their kids were killed, you know" (Casey). Casey gave an example of one of the outside counselors attempting to debrief teachers,

So his intent was good but when he came in and he wanted to meet with all the teachers and he starts debriefing them as if we were on a military, uh, mission that went bad. And he starts flashing and talking about blood ... and things that our teachers had just seen and experienced and ... his whole presentation was way out there ... Do you know, I had to stop that ... how to uh, put aside these things that you've seen? How to go on and, this is just part of life ... and you know, 'I've seen this and I've seen this.' And you know we're looking at pictures of people that were killed ... We don't want to see that. So, I politely, but firmly ... just stopped his presentation. I mean, I said, 'Thanks, but no thanks. See you later.'

In Ruth's opinion, the work provided by N.O.V.A. was effective; however, Newman et al. (2004) explain that teachers were concerned about the limited focus on their emotional toll. The day after the tragedy, students did not attend school, but teachers returned to school for counseling and debriefing over how to react to students upon their return. Many teachers stated they were not ready for such a tragedy and not able to handle "their own suffering because so much emphasis was put on preparing them for their students' reactions" (p. 126). In responding to the effectiveness of the counseling they received, teachers reacted with it was not enough "to meet their emotional needs after this experience" (p. 26). Counselors tended to agree that many of the faculty and staff would need longer term counseling.

One Westside teacher summed it up this way for teachers, "the school did not do enough to provide counseling or compensation for those who needed to take time off" (Newman et al., 2004, p. 226). However, Newman et al. (2004) explained, "the Arkansas Crime Victims'

Reparations Board provided for counseling services for six months”; however, the limitations of the services included “written requests for” approval (p. 276).

Shively provided a description of the impact of the crisis upon her as a teacher,

I did see a private therapist for a while. Um, and I called my doctor immediately, you know, that day of the shooting and said, ‘You, I know, I know myself well enough to know you’re gonna have [to give] me something to let me sleep. Because there’s no way I can close my eyes ... And not see, what I saw.’

Newman et al. (2004) state that “finding someone to listen” is critical for dealing with trauma, but also costly (p. 276). The authors explain that funds were available to individuals affected by the crisis to seek counseling, but red tape and the stigma of counseling kept some from receiving therapy. Newman et al. (2004) referred to one grieving teacher explaining that many of her peers wanted to move on from the tragedy; thus, they did not want to talk about it. The teacher could only talk about it with a teacher from Columbine High School, her husband, and her counselor.

To assist faculty and teachers, Rachel at times invited “everybody over to my house”, more specifically, “faculty and staff that wanted to come” for them to tell their story from “our own point of view”. She encouraged teachers “to just come and just have [that] time together”.

School counselors at the elementary school had an open door policy for teachers who wanted to come into their office for peer professional support, debriefing, and counseling. Rhodes stated there were a few teachers whom the school counselors assisted and in turn the teachers assisted the school counselors. Data supporting these claims and other challenges school counselors faced are detailed in the next section.

School counselors’ challenges. School counselors were impacted by the rampage school shooting personally and professionally. These challenges made it difficult to work through personal recovery. However, school counselors learned and grew from challenges professionally.

Personal. Rachel discussed some of the personal aspect of the crisis, “And little [student’s name] ... the little girl that died there, the first one out of the ... the very first one out of the building that they shot she was my student aide”. Rachel continued,

Because I was beside [teacher’s name], she was bleeding ... but [teacher’s name] ... was bleeding profusely. And there was blood everywhere, on the sidewalks, in the grass. And I had worn a black knit pantsuit to school that day and when I put [it] in my wash machine that night the water was just bloody. I didn’t realize how bloody I was.

Rachel was unable to get images and words from her mind from the experience with the teacher,

I couldn’t get [teacher’s name], uh, uh, her sweet face out of my mind because she was saying ‘She loved [teacher’s son’s name], tell [teacher’s son’s name], I love him, tell, tell.’ You know, all these things that she [was] saying there while she is dying, you know.

Rachel discussed her mood immediately after the incident, “so I was in no mood to help anybody. I needed help ... I didn’t get to talk to anybody really” except “my pastor came around 5:30 here in my office and we prayed”, and “about three weeks later”, I began inviting “faculty and staff that wanted to come” to my home to share telling “our” stories. Rachel described her personal need for someone to continue to listen to her and its impact on her family,

And then after I, I ... at the end of ‘99, uh, you know when you go through a school shooting or any kind of a disaster or tragedy like that everybody changes ... I don’t care what you say. Everybody is going to change. There’s going to be changes, cause even [my husband and me] as close as we were we changed. Because he got tired of me trying to, you know, get him to listen to me say, you know, I need help, I need someone to listen to me or I need this, I need that. You know, and it’s hard, he was trying to farm, long hours, he was tired.

Rachel described a major change she made in her life that led to the type of support she felt was missing,

I applied for that [school counseling position in a neighboring district] and went to work there the next year and that’s where I met probably my really true angel of mercy, her name is [nurse’s name]. She was the school, the district’s school nurse. And she took me under [her] wing and she was my therapist. She wasn’t a therapist by title, but she was my therapist.

Ruth stated, “We [school counselors] were victims ourselves in a sense”; she shared a personal impact of the tragedy,

But now ... And, and that was even a little bit difficult or it was a lot difficult because when I got home I had a son that had been there. I had a daughter that was at the elementary on that side- ... that, um, was upset because, you know, she had heard the ambulances and had been locked in the room in the lockdown. She had been afraid that my son and that her brother had died because [of] it- ... So I had things at home to deal with. I have another daughter and she was in, uh, daycare at that point ... and that’s where the boys parked their van, right in front of that, so it is just ... That felt personal too-

Ruth explained how peer support assisted her in dealing with the tragedy,

[Rhodes] and I and [Shively] we, we probably talked every day ... It seemed to help too because each one of us were down there ... and so we talked every day ... I don’t know, probably until the end of the year and just how we were doing and- things that were bothering us and that type of thing, and it seemed to help to be able to talk ... to someone that had seen that ... understood me ... so we did sort of help each other.

Rhodes confirmed, “[Shively], [Ruth], and I would meet together on a regular basis pretty much every day. And we would work through what we had seen and what we had dealt with”.

Shively provided more detail,

You know, so it was kinda hard for [Rhodes], and [Ruth], and I ... I bet for two years we, every, every planning period we spent in their office. The three of us just sitting there either praying, crying, trying to figure out, you know, why God would let this happen.

Professional. After the tragedy, school counselors made changes to their technical skills. “... In the summer they [N.O.V.A.] had a training, they brought people in to Jonesboro and did a training” (Rhodes). Ruth added some detail,

Some of us at the elementary, [Rhodes] and I and I can’t remember anybody else, went through I think a weeklong or three- or four-day long N.O.V.A. training that they offered. And I did sit a, a lot in some of the, the debriefing on how you talk and that type of thing with students in crisis.

Rachel explained that the training gave clarity to what it means to debrief, “Back then we didn’t even know what debriefing was ... Now, we understand debriefing, after we’ve been

N.O.V.A. trained, we've all been N.O.V.A. trained now, not all of us but many of the counselors are N.O.V.A. trained". Ruth explained N.O.V.A.'s debriefing training in more detail,

You sort of talked to the student about, you know, 'How did you find out about this? What were you doing when you heard?' And they would a lot of times tell you, you know, 'I was doing this ... ' and you talk to them about sometimes, um, sights and smells and- ... sounds- ... that they have heard and a lot of times, you know, you associate sometimes ... Like with my daughter she will always talk about the sirens and hearing all those sirens- ... and that, that ... And for a long time sirens would sort of trigger- ... those memories and, um, so you talk about how that's normal that there will be things that may bring these events back and, and that type of thing, and then you will talk about sort of, um, 'Has it gotten better ... since this happened? How are ... How are you doing?'

Gabby provided an acronym in describing N.O.V.A.'s debriefing strategy,

[It's] two Ss, two Vs and two Ps [S-S-V-V-P-P] ... The Ss are safety and security- physical safety and emotional security. We've already talked about that. Vent and validation, I get to say whatever stupid thing ... I'm thinking ... then you validate that those are perfectly normal. You need somebody to tell you that whatever you're thinking, 'It's okay.' If it's your thought, it's okay ... Then last is Prediction and Preparation, okay? This is today. We're sitting here today. What do you think is gonna happen tomorrow? What can you do to get ready for that? So it's a real simple process.

School counselors reflected on whether the N.O.V.A. training would have been beneficial during and after the tragedy. Rachel stated, "we could have pulled together all the other N.O.V.A. trained and we could have taken a population of kids and taken them to an organized debriefing session where they each could have listened to one another." Ruth stated that she had "been to other trainings but that's [N.O.V.A. training] the one that, that I liked the best"; however, she does not "think it would have worked that day" of the crisis. Rhodes provided an explanation, "You know, for the most part. Ah, N.O.V.A. stuff is a little more formal ... You know, but what, the training that we got you couldn't have done that, right, at that moment" during the crisis.

Recommendations (or lessons learned). Interviewees offered recommendations for counseling services as well as crisis management. For instance, Rachel suggested that schools return back to their normal routines after such a crisis as soon as possible. She explains,

But, it was only one day long. The next day everybody came back. And we started and that was ... I would advise anybody don't wait any longer than that ... because it's better for kids to be able to get back in their routine ... And for their questions to start being able to be dealt with. The more you stay home in a comfortable situation the avoidance of all that starts to set in ...

Casey stated that coming “back on the school campus” the night of the tragedy for counseling services “was a mistake”. She insisted that going “offsite somewhere, um, to provide help for people” works better than utilizing the crisis site. Reasons for her recommendation included the school site “was a mess”, and the entire residue from the crisis including blood “had to be cleaned up”. She continued, “Nobody wants to go back to the site where somebody was shot” especially, “within a few hours”. She added, “you come back, you see that, the kids relive it, relive it, relive it, you know? Yeah, that wasn't a good thing”. She also stated that having it on the site generated “more media” and more media produced, “more tension”. Casey recommended that schools have some type of crisis manager, she said, “there really needs to be in a, in an ideal situation a person that pulls that all together”.

Ruth recommended, “You got to keep your media under control”. She inferred that someone direct the media and keep them separate from the site. She explained, “and at some point they were asked to not be back on our campus I don't know, and they would line up and down the road ... the media has to be in control”. Rachel provided her thoughts on controlling the media, “you need to put them yards and yards and yards away ...” Rachel gave a reason why separating the media was beneficial, “So, when they go them over ... away from the school then

we had ... It seemed like we had more of a, uh, intimate time with our students and our staff and our school”.

Rhodes suggested that a screening procedure exists for checking credentials of outside counselors; in her own words, “have something in place to really check credentials, of people who, you know, show up ... you know, they, I’ve got a practice here, I’ve got a practice there ... you need to really check their credentials ...” Ruth stated checking “credentials more” is necessary. She goes on to say, “I think it was very important that you make sure that whoever volunteers is who they say [they] are ...” Clifton suggested that it is made clear that parents are afforded the opportunity to select their child’s outside counselor by checking counselors’ backgrounds as well. She states, “looking back, I probably would have been more selective about the school saying okay, here’s who is available ... Back then I didn’t know you could say well, are they Christian-based ...” She continues,

Well, something that bothered me about the lady that was helping us ... Is that she had never raised children ... I’m not saying that to be ugly ... but you want someone to relate too ... But she was an expert ... She was an expert and she had never raised children. And when I finally ... you know, I asked her, have, have you ever raised any children? She said, ‘well I keep my nieces a lot.’ I’m like okay, well that’s a little different.

Clifton also suggested that counselors facilitating group counseling are prepared to deal with “all kinds of emotions” and “to redirect people” when appropriate, “or take ‘em aside and say you know, I understand your feelings but maybe we need to, you know, go off by ourselves or something”. She continued by saying that counselors facilitating group counseling offer individual counseling,

And then also too, not only just a group [session] but [also] having some one-on-one time too, is good because like I was not the kind of person to really share at that time. I was a very bashful quiet person myself, and I needed ... It was good for me to hear what other pe-, how other people were processing it. But I also needed some one-on-one time.

Shively, who is currently an administrator, suggested that school counselors be involved in the debriefing process for all crisis situations; she gave an example, “even after the ice storm we debriefed, what did we see that we needed to fix, what can we do better next time, you know, and so they’re [school counselors] an important part of that. Gabby suggested that it is written in school policy that not only school counselors but also all faculty members are mandated to debrief after such a school crisis so that the counselor leader can say “Well, the superintendent mandates it; I can go to the principals and say ‘[superintendent’s name] mandates that we do this debriefing’”.

Comparisons

Comparison is used to “compare explicitly the results across different settings, groups, or events” (Yin, 2011, p. 79). For this study, findings from the current study are compared to Fein et al.’s (2008) findings, Daniels et al.’s (2007) study, and Austin’s (2003) self-report in relation to school counselors’ responses to school shootings. Comparisons assist in finding commonalities and differences in how school counselors’ have intervened and expected ways school counselors respond to such a tragedy.

Fein et al. (2008). The researcher examined Fein’s 2008 article, which included information from Fein’s 2003 book (same title as dissertation); both the article and the book are based on Fein’s 2001 dissertation, *Then and back again: A phenomenological inquiry of school shootings as experienced by school leaders* (see Chapter II). Fein (2001) interviewed 22 individuals across four school shooting sites at four different high schools in America. The researcher of the study at hand interviewed eight individuals regarding school counselors’ response to a rampage school shooting from one school district. The primary site for the current study centered on the middle school, but the elementary school was also included because of its

close proximity. Although Fein's (2001) dissertation research focused on formal leaders such as superintendents and principals, his interviews also led to interviews with school counselors and interviewing about school counselors and outside counselors' response in a school-shooting situation which he wrote about in a 2008 article with other authors entitled, *School shootings and counselor leadership: Four lessons from the field*. According to Fein et al. (2008), "this article will draw on the results of this study (Fein, 2001) to present some general lessons for school counselors who may be faced with disaster situations" (p. 246). The following list shows 18 findings from Fein et al.'s (2008) article compared with the researcher's findings from the current study:

Current Research Finding One: Steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included counseling and assessing the assailants, earthquake training, and establishing relationships with students and parents. Lessons learned included having a secure student information sharing process, allowing school counselors more time for individual counseling, development of post-shooting crisis plans, and additional crisis training for school counselors and teachers.

Fein et al.'s (2008) findings in terms of steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a school shooting was referred to in terms of administrative duties and minimal incident command training. A more detailed comparison has been provided below:

Pre-crisis preparation: crisis training/team.

1. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors accepted administrative responsibilities with limited incident command training or having not been assigned a formal administrative role before the shooting.

Current Study: According to school counselors, they were not part of a school or district wide crisis team before the crisis. However, Rachel indicated that she did have a defined role during an earthquake crisis, “I was responsible for getting the emergency, getting, you know, ambulance, call 9-1-1 or whatever”. School counselors were practiced in responding to natural disasters and lockdowns, but they were not assigned an administrative role in crisis situations before the school shooting incident.

Current Research Finding Two: School counselors’ limitations in their perceived expertness included having minimal or unused technical skills before the rampage school shooting. Lessons learned included awareness of school counselors’ attributes in building relationships, obtaining effective crisis training, awareness of the impact of a crisis on clients and self, the need for professional peer support, the need for more school counselors, the need for school counselors to do more therapy, and improved communication between outside counselors and school counselors

Fein et al.’s (2008) findings in terms of school counselors’ limitations in their perceived expertness were not made clear. The authors mentioned the benefits of school counselors’ skills in respect to self-care instead of limitations. A more detailed comparison has been provided below:

Pre-crisis awareness: technical–emotional readiness.

2. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors using their skills and background, eventually, were able to assess themselves.

Current Study: School counselors did not acknowledge using their skill set to assess their own emotional or physical needs.

Current Research Finding Three: Steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting included taking, giving, and fulfilling directives, addressing personal deterrents from fulfilling directives, collaboration and awareness of professional support, and ensuring the emotional and physical safety of others, primarily students. Lessons learned included school counselors assist in providing safety to everyone or their building population; however, their primary obligation is providing physical and emotional security to students and secondly the student's parents.

Fein et al.'s (2008) findings in terms of steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting also include taking directives only in comparison to the current research. A more detailed comparison has been provided below:

In-crisis protocol: taking directives.

3. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors accepted managerial roles and were expected to make numerous decisions uncommon to their normal expectations.

Current Study: During the crisis, a previous school counselor, Blanche Gabby, who had become a school psychologist, was assigned to head the newly formulated counseling center the night of the crisis. District school counselors were not given administrative responsibilities; yet, they did face decisions that were outside their normal duties, such as how to address well over 200 emotional student crisis survivors, assist emotional adults in crisis while personally experiencing the crisis, and shifting priorities from professional to personal and back to professional.

Current Research Finding Four: School counselors' perceived expertness in recognizing barriers during the rampage school shooting included self-awareness of the emotional effects of their professional persona on others, awareness of physical and emotional harm of others, awareness of the effect of rumors on crisis survivors and self, awareness and control of the personal aspect and internal emotions, and recognition of the need for professional support. Lessons learned included school counselors embodying the following perceived technical skills and qualities in helping others during the crisis: nurturing, calming, reassuring, being with you, and comforting.

Fein et al.'s (2008) findings in terms of school counselors' perceived expertness in recognizing barriers during the rampage school shooting included awareness of their internal emotions and personal impact from the crisis. A more detailed comparison has been provided below:

In-crisis awareness: emotional state.

4. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors were emotional, worried over "making mistakes" and "felt alone" and sensed the "weight of leadership" (Fein, 2003, p. 147).
Current Study: According to Rhodes, she was not sure if she was "doing the right thing or saying the right things" while assisting students during the crisis. Ruth exclaimed that at the time of the crisis, she could have used some "outside help". Rachel stated she felt "alone" during the aftermath of the crisis. The three school counselors felt overwhelmed during the crisis.

In-crisis awareness: challenges.

5. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors stated they were impacted by the crisis and aware of the possibility of secondary trauma from working with others who were experiencing traumas.

Current Study: School counselors did not state they were aware of the possibility of secondary trauma, but they did acknowledge that they were personally impacted by the crisis.

Current Research Finding Five: Steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included taking and fulfilling directives, collaborating and requesting professional support, participating in group debriefings, being available to parents and students, being a peer support for faculty, providing reassurance and emotional safety, and utilizing the following strategies: listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals. Lessons learned included school counselors' willingness to perform various tasks or role flexibility.

Fein et al.'s (2008) findings in terms of steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included school counselors taking, fulfilling, and giving subtle directives, assisting with logistics, mitigating trauma responses and distressing others, and utilizing the following strategies: listening skills, providing a safe environment, mega-family therapy, systems principle technique, and an informal use of counseling and debriefing skills. A more detailed comparison has been provided below:

Post-crisis recovery: taking and fulfilling directives.

6. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors were requested to fulfill responsibilities such as problem-solving safety concerns for students or addressing psychological triage issues after the shooting.

Current Study: All interviewees stated school counselors provided physical and emotional security to students during the crisis (especially in the gym). Gabby, counseling leader who worked as a school counselor before becoming a school psychologist, was responsible for psychological triage during the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

Post-crisis recovery: giving subtle directives.

7. Fein et al. (2008): During the immediate aftermath of the shootings, some school counselors influenced administration decisions such as determining school closings and school building repair.

Current Study: According to Rhodes, during the meeting that took place the evening of the tragedy, “our superintendent looked at us [school counselors] and he said, ‘What do you all want?’” The school counselors replied, “We want N.O.V.A. to come.” Afterwards, N.O.V.A. was invited to assist with counseling and helping crisis survivors. However, the crisis management team, which did not include school counselors but did include Gabby, met with the superintendent to determine school closings.

Post-crisis recovery: logistics.

8. Fein et al. (2008): Some school counselors assisted with logistics rather than group or individual counseling during the immediate aftermath of school shootings.

Current Study: During the immediate aftermath, Rhodes assisted with taking phone calls. Rachel assisted with cleaning out lockers for law enforcement. Ruth continued to provide counseling to parents and children. All school counselors attended a meeting to discuss ways the school district needed to go forward with counseling services. The primary person over counseling services “logistics” was Blanche Gabby.

Post-crisis recovery: goals and strategies.

9. Fein et al. (2008): One counselor was assigned to “mitigate the trauma response by allowing victims “to ventilate some of their feelings in a safe environment” (Fein, 2001, p. 143).

Current Study: School counselors gave students and parents the opportunity to “tell their stories” (Ruth and Rhodes) while “reassuring” them they were safe (Ruth, Rhodes, Rachel).

10. Fein et al. (2008): One counselor utilized “mega-family therapy. I applied system principles from the family and broadened it to the school and to the community at large” (Fein, 2001, p. 220).

Current Study: School counselors did not state they used family therapy or system principles. They did state they used basic counseling techniques such as listening, building rapport, and empathizing.

11. Fein et al. (2008): To assist with stress, school counselors used counseling and debriefing skills that seemed to be a regular conversation to school leaders.

Current Study: School counselors did not attempt to counsel school leaders.

Current Research Finding Six: School counselors' perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included awareness and identification of the long-term impact on students, parents, teachers, and self, requests for additional assistance for student school counseling services, availability to teachers, developed strategy to address unwilling clients, obtained additional crisis training, and reflected on additional training effectiveness for such a crisis. Lessons learned included return to normal routine soon, do not invite crisis survivors back to site the night of the crisis, control the media, employ a screening process for outside counselors, group facilitators redirect people when necessary, include school counselors in the debriefing process.

Fein et al.'s (2008) findings in terms of school counselors' perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included lessons learned to employ a screening process for outside counselors, awareness of need for additional assistance for student school counseling services, awareness of role conflict or flexibility, strategy to address unwilling clients (except for self), awareness and identification of the crisis impact on self. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

Post-crisis awareness: peer professional challenges.

12. Fein et al. (2008): There were no plans or guidelines for screening outside counselors' credentials; some outside volunteer counselors did not have experience working with children; some volunteers were not trained professional counselors; some volunteers attempted to influence crisis survivors with their religious ideology.

Current Study: According to Casey, many volunteers claimed they were counselors but were not. Rhodes admonished that credentials were not “checked well enough”. Ruth, Rachel, and Gabby exclaimed that screening of volunteers eventually took place. Clifton stated that her daughter worked with an outside counselor who did not have experience working with children and was not in-line with her belief system as a parent and a Christian.

Post-crisis awareness: school counselor challenges and self-care.

13. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors worked beyond their normal duties in the aftermath of school shootings; for instance, school counselors found providing counseling services to a great number of students an overwhelming task in the aftermath of school shootings.

Current Study: Rachel explained that when students returned from the summer break they were still emotional and required much attention; so much, that she had to ask the principal to hire more help.

14. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors at times had to decide between the aims of the school and the aims of the crisis management team during the immediate aftermath of school shootings.

Current Study: All school counselors were given directives from which they at some point shifted and then returned to fulfill. School counselors were also given directives that were logistics for the school, such as locking doors and cleaning out lockers while at other times responding directly to the emotional and physical needs of the student population. Nevertheless, school counselors were not officially members of a crisis management team.

15. Fein et al. (2008): Some school counselors used informal dialogue as a way to counsel unwilling participants.

Current Study: School counselors did not claim that they were using informal or subtle conversations for counseling purposes, but Rhodes did state at times she was unsure if what she was saying or doing was the right thing.

16. Fein et al. (2008): One school counselor had difficulty sleeping because of the impact of the crisis.

Current Study: School counselors did not state that they had problems sleeping; however, Rachel stated, “I couldn’t get [deceased teacher’s name] uh, uh, her sweet face out of my mind ...”

17. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors did not take advantage of counseling services provided for them.

Current Study: School counselors did not seek counseling from outside counseling services (except that Rachel did speak with her pastor). They did participate in the debriefing offered to faculty and staff the day after the shooting. They also included peer and family support as a way of dealing with the personal impact of the tragedy.

18. Fein et al. (2008): School counselors were unaware of the totality of the emotional toll the crisis had on them.

Current Study: School counselors did not state that they were unaware of the emotional toll the crisis had on them; in fact, they stated the opposite in that they recognized immediately that they were impacted. For instance, Rachel stated the day of the shooting that the emotional toll for her was so, “that she does not know how

capable she is of spearheading the counseling that will be necessary in the days to come” (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette Staff, 1998, p. 11A).

Four themes or lessons for school counselors who may find themselves experiencing a school shooting emerged from Fein et al.’s (2008) findings: 1) be prepared to lead, 2) serving two organizations creates role conflict, 3) employ subtle counseling, and 4) minister to thyself (Fein, 2008). In respect to “be prepared to lead”, school counselors at Westside school district were not assigned leadership roles before or during the crisis. School counselors were expected by administration to address the emotional and physical needs of the students. In terms of “serving two organizations creates role conflict”, school counselors at Westside were not an official part of a crisis response team that addressed violence on the school campus; although they were given procedures to follow for lockdowns and natural disaster crises. School counselors received directives from administration and the assigned counselor leader who was part of the crisis management team. At times, school counselors shifted priorities for personal reasons while fulfilling directives, but all in all, they fulfilled their directives. In regard to “employ subtle counseling”, school counselors at Westside, viewed themselves as fulfilling their professional mandate in counseling others. They did not perceive their helping others as being informal or subtle. Lastly, in reference to “minister to thyself”, school counselors did not seek counseling from outside counselors, instead they participated in the faculty and staff debriefing the day after the tragedy, and they leaned on family and peer support. Differences to keep in context when comparing the current research to the research of Fein et al. (2008) include school counselors were interviewed across four school shooting sites and the school shootings took place at high schools. Regarding the current research, the research focuses on one school shooting site and the school shooting took place at a middle school.

Daniels et al. (2007). Another of the few research articles to have a purposeful focus on school counselors' response to a school shooting is Daniels et al.'s (2007) article, *In the aftermath of a school hostage event: A case study of one school counselor's response*. Different from the current study, Daniels et al. (2007) interviewed one person who was a school counselor during the time of the crisis, and although firearms were present and individuals were held captive in a small rural town high school classroom in Western United States, shots were not fired. In addition, different from the Westside shooting, the assailant was a 17-year-old Caucasian male. Daniels et al. (2007) focused on not only the school counselors' response to the event but other factors related to the successful outcome of the situation. The researcher of this study will only focus on Daniels et al.'s (2007) 10 findings that are specific to the school counselors' response to the incident in comparing with the current research. For further information regarding other factors related to the outcome of the event from Daniels et al.'s (2007) research, please see Chapter II. The following list shows findings from Daniels et al.'s (2007) article compared with the researcher's findings from the current study:

Current Research Finding One: Steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included counseling and assessing the assailants, earthquake training, and establishing relationships with students and parents. Lessons learned included having a secure student information sharing process, allowing school counselors more time for individual counseling, development of post-shooting crisis plans, and additional crisis training for school counselors and teachers.

Daniels et al.'s (2007) findings in terms of steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included assessment of the

situation, relationship with assailant. Lessons learned were to develop more student relationships and employees receive crisis training. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

Pre-crisis preparation: assessments.

1. Daniels et al. (2007): assessed the situation before it happened, via rumors (active interventions) (p. 485).

Current Study: Although there were rumors that the assailants were planning to commit a violent act to others at the school, school counselors were not privy to such rumors. School counselors did not perceive the assailants as at-risk violent offenders before the shooting.

Pre-crisis preparation: relationships and training.

2. Daniels et al. (2007): School counselors' recommendations included school counselors "develop relationships with all students, and be aware of what is happening in the school and take rumors seriously" (p. 486), and the counselors suggest that school officials receive crisis intervention training.

Current Study: School counselors saw their relationships as crucial for expressing genuineness and trust with students and parents throughout the crisis. The media reported that Rachel knew that the assailants were planning to attack the school, but Rachel stated that was not true. She insisted she would have taken such a rumor seriously. She stated, "I would have ran in front of a train before I would want any of those kids killed". School counselors received N.O.V.A. crisis training soon after the tragedy. Lastly, Ruth recommended relationships are developed as well except she explained it as developing a process for students to bond with a trusted adult for information sharing purposes. Two of the school counselors viewed N.O.V.A. crisis

training as beneficial for responding after a rampage school shooting. The other school counselor believed the N.O.V.A. crisis training that she received would have been helpful during as well as after the crisis.

Pre-crisis preparation: relationships.

3. Daniels et al. (2007): had a previous relationship with the assailant (relationship).

Current Study: The elementary school counselors, Ruth and Rhodes, had a relationship with one of the assailants, Andrew Golden. The middle school counselor, Rachel, had a relationship with both assailants, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden.

4. Daniels et al. (2007): possessed the knowledge that the student was having difficulties with school conditions (relationship).

Current Study: The middle school counselor, Rachel, was informed that Golden was considering harming himself; however, during a one-on-one session with Golden, he denied such thoughts. Rachel also was aware that Johnson was having problems on the football team and was often upset at his football coach.

Daniels et al. (2007) did not report findings that referenced school counselors' limitations in their perceived expertness; such findings correspond with the current research findings in the pre-crisis awareness phase or finding number two. However, Daniels et al. (2007) did report results that corresponded with the in-crisis protocol phase or finding number three of the current research. The current research finding number three and Daniels et al.'s (2007) corresponding results are explained next.

Current Research Finding Three: Steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting included taking, giving, and fulfilling directives, addressing personal deterrents from fulfilling directives, collaboration and awareness of professional support, and ensuring the emotional and physical safety of others, primarily students. Lessons learned included school counselors assist in providing safety to everyone or their building population; however, their primary obligation is providing physical and emotional security to students and secondly to the students' parents.

Daniels et al.'s (2007) findings in terms of steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting included notifying the crisis response team and a lesson learned to not escalate the crisis. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

In-crisis protocol: priorities.

5. Daniels et al. (2007): contacted the crisis response team from the school district (communicating with other professionals) (p. 485).

Current Study: School counselors were not responsible and did not contact the crisis response team during the crisis; according to school counselors, a crisis response team for such a tragedy did not exist before the shooting.

In-crisis protocol: safety

6. Daniels et al. (2007): The school counselor recommends that school counselors and others do not act in ways that may escalate a crisis.

Current Study: School counselors did not state this as a recommendation, but Rhodes implied it. She gave an example of outside helpers entering the gym crying and upset

immediately after the crisis. The helpers were so upset that they were affecting the students' emotional state. Rhodes stated the helpers were "bawling and squalling and screaming and I'm thinking, 'you've got to calm down. You cannot help me with these children.'" Rhodes explained that the school counselors had just gotten the students calm and the helpers' reactions were escalating the students' emotional state. School counselors explained that much of their efforts included calming emotional students, parents, and other adults by reassuring safety.

Daniels et al. (2007) did not report findings that referenced school counselors' perceived expertness in recognizing barriers during the rampage school shooting; such findings correspond with the current research findings in the in-crisis awareness phase or finding number four. However, Daniels et al. (2007) did report results that corresponded with the post-crisis recovery phase or finding number five of the current research. The current research finding number five and Daniels et al.'s (2007) corresponding results are explained next.

Current Research Finding Five: Steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included taking and fulfilling directives, collaborating and requesting professional support, participating in group debriefings, being available to parents and students, being a peer support for faculty, providing reassurance and emotional safety, and utilizing the following strategies: listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals. Lessons learned included school counselors' willingness to perform various tasks or role flexibility.

Daniels et al.'s (2007) findings in terms of steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included requesting

and coordinating professional support, being available to parents and students, and providing resources for students. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

Post-crisis recovery: professional support.

7. Daniels et al. (2007): coordinated efforts of community mental health providers who were brought in (active interventions) (p. 485).

Current Study: School counselors assisted in coordination efforts during the aftermath of the school shooting. Blanche Gabby directed the logistics and collaboration with mental health helpers during the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

8. Daniels et al. (2007): contacted the community mental health center to request assistance (communicating with other professionals) (p. 485).

Current Study: School counselors did not contact the community mental health agencies during the immediate aftermath of the shooting.

Post-crisis recovery: availability.

9. Daniels et al. (2007): met with students and parents after the event (active interventions) (p. 485).

Current Study: School counselors met with students and parents during the immediate aftermath of the shooting and beyond.

Post-crisis recovery: goals and strategies.

10. Daniels et al. (2007): provided resources for students (active interventions) (p. 485).

Current Study: School counselors provided parents with referral lists. School counselors utilized donations to give to students for counseling purposes. School

counselors discussed school safety and provided coping skills through guidance and group sessions.

Daniels et al. (2007) did not report findings that referenced school counselors' perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process. Such findings correspond with the current research findings in the post-crisis awareness phase or finding number six. However, Daniels et al. (2007) did develop categories for their findings that included active interventions, communicating with other professionals, and relationship. Active interventions relate to the school counselor assessing the situation, meeting with students and parents, providing resources for students, and coordinating mental health agency efforts. Communicating with other professionals includes contacting the crisis response team, the community mental health center, and serving as the coordinator of these persons. Lastly, relationship refers to the frequent interpersonal interactions with the assailant. All elements of each category have been discussed and compared with the current findings. Differences to keep in context when comparing the current research to the research of Daniels et al. (2007) are that there was only one school counselor interviewed, the event took place at a high school, and no one was physically harmed. The current research included eight interviewees and three of the interviews were school counselors, the event took place at a middle school but because of the close proximity it impacted the elementary school as well, and individuals were physically harmed.

Austin (2003). A final comparison has been done with a school counselor self-report of her lived experience of the Columbine High School rampage school shooting (see Chapter II). The school counselor was from a different school than the school in which the shooting took place. She entered the crisis site during the immediate aftermath of the shooting. She assisted

with counseling services. Afterwards, she gained additional knowledge of school counselors' responses during the incident by speaking with her peers who experienced the happenings of the tragedy as it was taking place. She wrote about her knowledge and experience and concluded with three major findings that have been listed and compared with the current research (see Chapter II for additional information regarding Austin's (2003) self-report). Austin's (2003) findings are relevant to current research findings numbers one and six.

Current Research Finding One: Steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included counseling and assessing the assailants, earthquake training, and establishing relationships with students and parents. Lessons learned included having a secure student information sharing process, allowing school counselors more time for individual counseling, development of post-shooting crisis plans, and additional crisis training for school counselors and teachers.

Austin's (2003) findings in terms of steps or courses of action that school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included relationships. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

Pre-crisis preparation: relationships.

- 1) Austin (2003): Relationships are key (p. 485). Columbine counselors found that their peer relationships before the crisis were critical in collaborative team work during and after the crisis.

Current Study: According to Rhodes, her work relationship with Ruth was beneficial in working as a team during the crisis. In her own words, she viewed their working relationship as "an advantage". Casey described her working relationship with

Rachel. She stated Rachel was “my right arm” and that they “worked together, very, very closely”.

Current Research Finding Six: School counselors’ perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included awareness and identification of the long-term impact on students, parents, teachers, and self, requests for additional assistance for student school counseling services, availability to teachers, developed strategy to address unwilling clients, obtained additional crisis training, and reflected on additional training effectiveness for such a crisis. Lessons learned included return to normal routine soon, do not invite crisis survivors back to the site the night of the crisis, control the media, employ a screening process for outside counselors, group facilitators redirect people when necessary, include school counselors in the debriefing process.

Austin’s (2003) findings in terms of school counselors’ perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included awareness of the long-term impact on teachers and additional assistance for student school counseling services. A more detailed comparison has been provided below.

Post-crisis awareness: teacher challenges.

- 2) Austin (2003): Staff should seek therapy. Staff that did not receive counseling services over the summer break found it difficult to conduct their job responsibilities effectively.

Current Study: One Westside teacher summed it up this way for teachers, “the school did not do enough to provide counseling or compensation for those who needed to take time off” (Newman et al., 2004, p. 226). However, Newman et al. (2004) explain, “the Arkansas Crime Victims’ Reparations Board provided for counseling

services for six months”; however, the limitations of their services included “written requests for” approval (p. 276). The authors go on to explain that funds were available to individuals affected by the crisis to seek counseling, but red tape and the stigma of counseling kept some from receiving therapy. Rachel, the middle school counselor, at times invited “faculty and staff that wanted to come” to her home to provide a safe group environment in telling their stories.

Casey, the middle school principal, attended graduate school to become a counselor before eventually switching to administration. She stated teachers were very distraught, especially the ones who did not seek counseling. She described having to go to a teacher’s home who “locked herself in the bathroom. Says she’s, you know, going to kill herself.” She assisted the teacher that day, but the teacher soon “got out of the teaching field”. Casey also gave an example of a teacher who had been seeing a therapist and counseling made matters worse. The teacher requested that the principal “go with me to my therapist” because the teacher blamed the principal for the shooting; she informed the principal, “the only way I’m going to be able to get over this is if you go to therapy with me”. The principal refused to attend therapy sessions with the teacher. The teacher became “angry”, “threw rocks all over my car”, and “tried to run over me in the school parking lot”. Casey “filed charges” for harassment, and the teacher “switched jobs”.

Post-crisis awareness: school counselor challenges.

- 3) Austin (2003): Columbine counselors were overloaded. The needs of students and staff were too much for the counseling staff and additional school counselors and mental health providers were hired after the tragedy.

Current Study: Ruth and Rhodes had each other at the elementary school and with the assistance of referrals did not feel overwhelmed in the aftermath of the tragedy; however, Rachel as the sole school counselor at the middle school in which students and teachers were shot, felt so overwhelmed that she told administration that “they needed to hire somebody else to help me ...” eventually, “a social worker” was hired.

Although Austin’s (2003) self-report was not a peer-reviewed research article, the author provides some insight into school counselors’ responses to school shootings. The self-report has been used as a supplement for this study. The three major findings from Austin’s (2003) self-report have been compared with the current study.

There has been limited research completed with the primary focus of school counselors’ response to a rampage school shooting. By comparing findings from the research at hand to other relevant literature that tells school counselors’ lived experiences of school gun violence, the researcher aims to illuminate commonalities and differences in responding to such an event. Furthermore, comparisons help to highlight effective ways in which school counselors may respond to a rampage school shooting.

Summary

Important information of note for this chapter include getting a clear picture of how and what information was collected, participant background, gaining clarity on the paths each school counselor took to assist throughout the crisis as well as school counselors’ perceived timeline of events. This chapter also focused on the reasoning and strategy used by the researcher in analyzing data. Data were analyzed using a working conceptual framework based on theoretical integration. Results or findings include synthesized data via *a priori* coding within the phases of the working conceptual framework. Then, research findings were compared with research with a

similar focus, school counselors' response to school gun violence or school shootings. The next chapter offers a discussion that includes an interpretation of the analysis, synthesis, and comparisons of the findings, final conclusions, and recommendations.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Chapter V builds on the analysis, findings, and comparisons from Chapter IV. It includes a discussion that interprets the analysis, synthesis, and comparisons of findings. In addition, a conclusion that provides concluding statements based on the research findings and interpretations, and lastly, recommendations for practice, implementation, and further research.

Discussion

This section provides a discussion that includes an interpretation of the analysis, synthesis, and comparisons of the findings. The analysis section in Chapter IV offered an explanation of how the findings were broken down via a working or integrated theoretical framework (see Table 4.2). The findings section in Chapter IV explored themes (or patterns of categories that emerged) within the phases of the working theoretical framework. The comparison section in Chapter IV detailed how the literature aligns with or contradicts the current research. The information from Chapter IV helps to establish credibility and issues of trustworthiness for the interpretations that follow.

The research questions for the current study included: The primary question, how did school counselors' respond to a rampage school shooting? And sub-questions: 1. What were the actions taken by school counselors upon first hearing of a possible school shooting to the immediate aftermath of a rampage school shooting? 2. What are the lessons learned from school counselors' lived experience of a rampage school shooting?

School counselors' courses of actions taken, perceived expertness and lessons learned have been detailed per phase of the working or integrated theoretical framework, School Counselors' Response to School Shootings (S.C.R.S.S.) Framework (see section entitled *findings* in Chapter IV). Interpretations of the courses of actions taken, perceived expertness, and lessons

learned have been presented for each phase in this section. Current literature that verifies similar or different ways school counselors have responded in similar situations have been included to provide context for further interpretation for corresponding phases.

Pre-Crisis Preparation

Elementary and middle school counselors at Westside unknowingly took steps to reduce the chances of being ill-prepared to respond to clients' needs during and after a rampage school shooting; however, there were discrepancies regarding certain actions taken. Steps or courses of actions school counselors unknowingly took in preparing for a rampage school shooting included counseling and assessing the assailants, earthquake training, and establishing relationships with students and parents. Lessons learned included having a secure student information sharing process, allowing school counselors more time for individual counseling, development of post-shooting crisis plans, and additional crisis training for school counselors and teachers. All in all, important interpretations from this section include improvements in assessment approaches, school counselors as members of crisis teams, and methods of establishing relationships are critical.

Assessments. Media reports indicated that a student informed the school counselor that Golden had planned to harm others at the school, but the school counselor denied that a student informed her that Golden would harm others at the school. Instead, the middle school counselor assessed Golden for self-harm, and the other assailant, Johnson, for anger. Although the school counselor met with the assailants regarding self-harm and anger, the two were not seen as “at-risk” violent offenders. The school counselor focused on the presenting characteristics of each student (Golden and Johnson) at the time to determine her assessment. Similarly, a high school counselor from a different school district in the Western United States attempted to assess a

potential situation via rumors, but the assessment did not stop a 17-year-old white male from holding a class hostage by gun point (Daniels et al., 2007). Research indicates that no one would have been able to predict these students as school shooters simply by the students' characteristics or simply by their individual behaviors (O'Toole et al., 1999). According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA)'s ethical standards (2010), school counselors "utilize assessment measures within the scope of practice for school counselors and for which they are trained and competent" (p. 3). Therefore, updated and effective improvement in assessment approaches is paramount for school counselors. The most promising research for helping to assess student gun violence includes a team, holistic, and integrated approach advocated by Dreal (2011), Verlinden et al. (2000), and Fein et al. (2004) (see Chapter II).

Crisis teams. There were also discrepancies regarding crisis teams, plans, and procedures. School counselors were not in agreement of whether or not the school district had a crisis team or whether a school counselor was part of that team. School counselors did agree that they (the three school counselors interviewed) were not part of a crisis team. School counselors were not in agreement over crisis plans and procedures. Although many interviewees denied having a crisis plan, Ruth and Rhodes described in detail a crisis procedure. It is possible that the discrepancy between plans and procedures was that there was a lockdown procedure in place but the lockdown procedure was not intended for a rampage school shooting. Furthermore, there was also a natural disaster crisis plan in place. All interviewees agreed that schools had earthquake training, which included drills, and the middle school counselor was assigned a specific role in the earthquake plans. It was agreed that the earthquake training was beneficial in responding to the rampage school shooting. For instance, the middle school's counselor's role during the earthquake drill was to contact emergency assistance such as 911. During the crisis, one of her

first tasks was directing office personnel to contact 911. According to Fein et al. (2008), high school counselors across four different shooting sites accepted administrative responsibilities throughout a school shooting crisis that they did not have before the shootings. Needless to say, it is evident that school counselors could play an important part of a crisis team. Federal guidelines for schools to create school crisis plans continually point to counselors as a significant aspect in prevention, response, and recovery during a crisis (U.S. Department of Education, 2007; U.S. Department of Education et al., 2013; U.S. Department of Justice et al., 2012). However, these guidelines only offer general recommendations for counselors. Rhodes, Ruth, and Rachel affirmed that they could have used guidance throughout the crisis. There is a need for a thorough crisis response framework (also see Chapter II) for school counselors that can be included in district or school crisis plans to assist school counselors in such a crisis.

Relationships. School counselors' established relationships with students and faculty are critical to responding to school shootings. According to a parent (Clifton) and a middle school student (White) at the time of the crisis, the established relationships they had with the school counselors were beneficial throughout the crisis. Daniels et al.'s (2007) research recognizes that the school counselors' relationship with the assailant was a pivotal aspect to the crisis at their particular site. Austin (2003), in speaking of the Columbine school shooting, stated that relationships that school counselors had with their peers created an effective collaborative team effort throughout the crisis. This was also the case for the Westside School shooting; Rhodes saw her established relationship with Ruth as an "advantage" in working with emotional students. According to the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) (n.d.a) section on crisis on its webpage, it is important to "rebuild and reaffirm attachments and relationships" not only before a crisis, but after a crisis as well.

Establishing relationships have been seen as an important aspect in preparing for a school shooting. Ruth suggested that one way to “build those communications and people they trust” is to create some type of student information sharing process. However, there were not many suggestions as to how to establish relationships or ideas for a student information sharing process. Clifton offered traits and ways that she perceived school counselors were effective in building relationships such as checking-in on students, being a parent advocate, approachable, and go-to-people, especially in times of personal crisis. Considering these traits and ways, other methods can be gleaned such as establishing mentorship programs (gives an official reason to check-in on students), teacher advisory programs (students may see teachers as a go-to-person for assistance), and establishing parent education nights (opportunity to provide resources to parents and stay in touch).

Pre-Crisis Awareness

School counselors’ limitations in their perceived expertness included having minimal or unused technical skills before the rampage school shooting. Lessons learned included awareness of school counselors’ attributes in building relationships, obtaining effective crisis training, awareness of the impact of a crisis on clients and self, the need for professional peer support, the need for more school counselors, the need for school counselors to do more therapy, and improved communication between outside counselors and school counselors. Interpretations included for this finding or phase include periodically updated crisis training, school counselor supervisor with counseling training, and create an interactive process with outside counselors.

Periodic crisis training. Rachel stated there was nothing done to “prepare for what happened ... I didn’t have any crisis skills except just things ... that I taught in group guidance”. Ruth had a different perspective she stated, “I possessed the skills but I had never really had to

use those skills”. Gabby suggested that school counselors should be aware of the “aftershocks” to crisis survivors, personal “mental health” and “compassion fatigue”, and that effective crisis training include practices and drills. Thus, it seems probable that school counselors periodically receive up-to-date crisis training that includes education on the impact of self and others, burn-out, and practices or drills for active shooters as well as psychological triage or response interventions. Furthermore, school counselors have a “legal and ethical duty to act reasonably to prevent school violence” (Hermann and Finn, 2002, para 24). Therefore, it is a legal and ethical mandate for school counselors to stay up-to-date on proven violence prevention strategies and interventions in terms of school violence.

School counselor supervisor. Ruth stated, “... I needed somebody to, to lead me into it and so it would ... put me in the right direction”. Rhodes stated they have “never had a counseling supervisor” to go to for directions in dealing with major issues. After the crisis, Gabby, who previously worked as a school counselor, was assigned the counseling leader over the counseling center. Ruth, Rhodes, and Rachel all agreed that her efforts were indeed beneficial to responding to the immediate aftermath of the crisis. In comparison with other studies, Fein et al. (2008) found that school counselors readily accepted leadership positions and were expected to decide numerous decisions uncommon to their normal expectations. One of the ASCA National Model’s (2012) competencies for school counselors is that, “an effective school counselor is able to ... provide team leadership to the school and community in a crisis” (pp. 156–157). However, it is possible that a need to be “led” may prompt self-doubt or confusion if a school counselor or counselor leader is not assigned before or during the crisis to offer guidance (Ruth). According to the *Guide for preventing and responding to school violence* (2012), school counselors should “stay in close contact with the counseling director of the crisis management

team” for guidance (p. 28). Needless to say, school counselors are more likely to be effective with a school counselor supervisor or leadership guidance during a crisis. Limitations in comparing school shootings across settings may include the size of the school district. Larger school districts may find themselves in a better financial and resource position in hiring a permanent school counselor director or supervisor. However, despite finances, a school counselor may be appointed a counselor leader position strictly for crisis situations.

School-based counselors’ process. According to Newman et al. (2004), in situations in which children need more therapy than the school counselor is in a position to offer, the Westside school counselor would refer to an available school-based therapist. Ruth, Gabby, Casey, and Rachel affirmed that individuals were referred out as needed. Casey also explained that a major problem for awareness of student struggles dealt with communication of student progress or if a student was seeing a therapist at all,

Well we’d refer them out to somebody we never got any feedback. We never, we never, sometimes kids were in, were in therapy and we didn’t even know it ... parents can sign off and allow for that ... information to be exchanged back and forth. It just helps us to serve the kids better.

For example, school counselors were unaware that Johnson had other problems besides football. He was seeing a psychologist for treatment for more concerning issues (Fox et al., 2003). It is possible that if the school counselor was aware of this service, she may have collaborated with the psychologist to assist in creating school conditions conducive to Johnson’s needs. School counselors who are able to create an interactive and open communication process with a student’s outside counselor or therapist and parents or legal guardian have a greater chance of effectively helping said student during school hours. ASCA supports such an interaction. The ASCA National Model (2012) informs school counselors that “an effective

school counselor is able to ... involve appropriate school and community professionals as well as the family in a crisis situation” (p. 157).

In-Crisis Protocol

Steps or courses of actions taken by school counselors to help de-escalate the crisis and provide safety or help to crisis survivors during a rampage school shooting included taking, giving, and fulfilling directives, addressing personal deterrents from fulfilling directives, collaboration and awareness of professional support, and ensuring the emotional and physical safety of others, primarily students. Lessons learned included school counselors assist in providing safety to everyone or their building population; however, their primary obligation is providing physical and emotional security to students and secondly the students’ parents. Interpretations for this finding or phase include school counselors having a plan for personal family members during a crisis, establishing clear roles and expectations, and encompassing a variety of de-stressing techniques.

Family members. School counselors were given directives immediately upon administration’s awareness of the crisis. However, school counselors, appropriately, found it difficult to fulfill those directives because of personal concerns for loved ones who were experiencing the crisis. Primary concerns for loved ones included family members. According to Rhodes, “... [when I] saw everything, it went from trying to help to I’ve got to find my niece”. Ruth became concerned for her son who was a middle school student and attending school that day. Both school counselors were able to find their loved ones and made sure they were okay and it was “then I thought, okay, I, I can, I can work” now. It seems reasonable that school counselors with loved ones attending school not only make sure those children are aware of the school’s crisis plans and procedures but also develop personal plans for communication and

pick-up. At the time of the crisis, “not every kid” had a cell phone (Rhodes), and even if they did “the circuits were jammed ... cell phones wouldn’t work” (Ruth). Clifton affirmed, “There was no cell phone service because it was jammed”. Technology has improved and today more students have cell phones. During a crisis, students are likely to use their cell phones to contact help. It seems probable that school counselors help students create a calling tree to make known their crisis and for pick-up. For instance, students may attempt to call a parent who happens to be a school counselor during a crisis but may be unable to reach him or her, the second call or text may go to an older sibling, spouse, or aunt etc. By creating a calling tree, the relative of the school counselor has a protocol of safety of which the school counselor is aware and may be able to follow-up. Of course, the calling tree would serve as an order of pick-up as well. If a student is unable to utilize a cell phone, a protocol could be in place for the student to meet up with a fellow student who has been able to contact his or her family and is a friend of the family or a trusted adult on the scene. The idea is to have a protocol or plan for communication and pick-up for loved ones to assist with their loved one’s safety and personal anxiety of the school counselor during a crisis. For instance, Ruth was able to get “a hold of a phone in the gym [to] get a message to my husband ... [to pick] up my son ...” and thus, more emotionally available to other students in need. Lastly, this interpretation is mainly concerning students who are not of age to drive; however, such a plan for junior high and high school students may be beneficial in case access to personal transportation is problematic and so that loved ones are on the same page.

Role expectations. School counselors completed several tasks during the crisis. Tasks included unexpected responsibilities such as “locking doors” (Ruth), requesting “supplies” (Shively), and informing office personnel to call 911 (Rhodes). There were some discrepancies in what was school counselors’ main priority during the crisis. Casey stated that school

counselors should be concerned with “the safety of everyone”. Rachel stated that the school counselor’s main priority is the safety of her building “population”. Shively exclaimed school counselors should be concerned with the welfare of “kids and the parents”. Gabby explained school counselors priority should be the “physical” and “emotional” security of the “kids”. Considering all of these points, it is possible to conclude that school counselors assist in providing safety to everyone or their building population; however, their primary obligation is providing physical and emotional security to students and secondly the students’ parents. During the crisis, Rachel initially assisted a teacher who was physically harmed, but Ruth and Rhodes’ initial priority was to assist the children.

In comparison with similar research, school counselors dealt more with logistics and administrative tasks. Fein et al. (2008) insist that during a school shooting, school counselors accepted administration positions and were expected to make numerous decisions uncommon to their normal expectations. Another study affirmed a school counselor contacting assistance. According to Daniels et al. (2007), the school counselor “contacted the crisis response team from the school district” during the crisis (p. 485).

The ASCA National Model (2012) makes plain that, “an effective school counselor is able to ... understand *the role of the school counselor* and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan” (p. 157). It would serve schools and school counselors well to provide clear roles and expectations for school counselors but also allow for role flexibility during a crisis.

De-stressing techniques. After the crisis, school counselors received additional crisis training sponsored by the National Organization for Victim Assistance (N.O.V.A.). Rachel insisted that what she learned from the training would have helped during the training if she was able to take “a population of kids and taken them to an organized debriefing session”. Ruth and

Rhodes insisted that because of the students' emotional state an organized debriefing session would not have been possible. All of the school counselors stated that the main goal was calming and reassuring the students. In comparative research, the school counselor interviewed in Daniels et al.'s (2007) research recommended that school counselors do not act in ways that may escalate a crisis. Rhodes stated a couple of outside helpers entered the gym and were "bawling and squalling and screaming and I'm thinking, 'you've got to calm down. You cannot help me with these children.'" Rhodes explained that the school counselors had just gotten the students calm and the helpers' reactions were escalating the students' emotional state. School counselors explained that much of their efforts included calming emotional students, parents, and other adults by reassuring safety. Strategies that school counselors used to calm students during the crisis included hugging students, reaffirming they were safe, sharing details, and encouraging peer group support. However, Rhodes explained that at times she was not sure "if I was doing the right thing ... or saying the right thing". It is likely that Rhodes could have benefited from knowing more de-stressing techniques to utilize with students. Nader and Nader (2012) advocate several de-stressing techniques to use during a crisis situation: deep breathing, mental imagery, and muscle relaxation methods. Deep breathing assists the nervous system to move from a stress state to a calming existence. Disturbing mental imagery is often a sign of anxious feeling and modifying these images may lessen anxiety. Muscle relaxation methods such as tense and relax techniques assist with physical and mental stress. Examples of tense and relax techniques include tense like a tree or go limp like a wiggly spaghetti noodle.

School counselors who periodically practice and update their de-stressing techniques may find them beneficial in any crisis situation. The ASCA National Model (2012) states that "an effective school counselor is able to ... understand what defines a crisis, the appropriate response

and a variety of intervention strategies to meet the needs of the individual, group, or school community before, during, and after crisis response” (pp. 156–157). School counselors who have a variety of intervention strategies at their disposal are more likely to find ways of calming others quickly and effectively.

In-Crisis Awareness

School counselors’ perceived expertness in recognizing barriers during the rampage school shooting included self-awareness of the emotional effects of their professional persona on others, awareness of physical and emotional harm of others, awareness of the effect of rumors on crisis survivors and self, awareness and control of the personal aspect and internal emotions, and recognition of the need for professional support. Lessons learned included school counselors embodying the following perceived technical skills and qualities in helping others during the crisis: nurturing, calming, reassuring, being with you, and comforting. Interpretations for this finding or phase include the ability to self-care and awareness of professional competency.

Self-care. During the crisis, school counselors had to work through their emotions. Rachel stated, “At the time I went back out and I was like still just petrified”. Rhodes felt like she had “just walked into the gates of Hell”. Ruth was taken aback because she “had never seen people that had been shot”. School counselors were petrified, horrified, and taken aback. In comparison with similar school shooting studies, school counselors were emotional, worried over “making mistakes” and “felt alone” and sensed the “weight of leadership” (Fein, 2003, p. 147). In addition, school counselors stated they were impacted by the crisis and aware of the possibility of secondary trauma from working with others who were experiencing traumas (Fein et al., 2008). It is not difficult to conclude that school counselors may have benefited from the ability to self-care during the crisis. Fein et al. (2008) explain that some school counselors were

able to use their skills and background, eventually, to assess themselves; however, assessment and self-care are different. Assessment helps school counselors to know, for instance, if they are experiencing “secondary trauma” (Fein et al., 2008), but self-care helps to address such issues. Nader and Nader (2012) suggest learning to pause (take a moment to recollect), pay attention to your inner voice (identify negative talk or disturbing emotions), challenge negative self-talk, and use positive affirmations. Tools for self-care during a crisis may assist school counselors in regulating their own emotions until they are able to receive further assistance from peers or personal counseling.

Professional competency. Ruth, Rhodes, and Rachel recognized the need for professional support. In doing so, school counselors were aware of their professional competency in addressing a crisis of a larger scale than their norm. Thus, school counselors did not show signs of being territorial or closed to outside help. It is probable to conclude that school counselors not only benefited from knowing the limitations of their own professional competencies but they also benefited from being open to receive assistance in caring for others by their peers and outside professionals. According to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010), “professional school counselors function within the boundaries of individual professional competence and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions” (p. 5).

Post-Crisis Recovery

Steps or course of actions taken by school counselors in helping crisis survivors and managing the effects of the crisis included taking and fulfilling directives, collaborating and requesting professional support, participating in group debriefings, being available to parents and students, being a peer support for faculty, providing reassurance and emotional safety, and utilizing the following strategies: listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust,

group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals. The lesson learned was the school counselors' willingness to perform various tasks or role flexibility. Interpretations for this finding or phase include having readily available resources as well as goals, strategies, and interventions for students, parents, and teachers.

Readily available resources. Westside learned the importance of managing personnel but may have benefited from additional training and readily available resources. Westside was inundated with students, parents, and other crisis survivors on the night of the crisis. Gabby, the assigned counseling leader, stated, "When you put out in the media that counseling would be available for families, we thought we might have 10 or 20 trickle in. It was almost 700 people that night." Not only was the number of returning individuals overwhelming but the school did not have adequate space to accommodate counseling. Gabby stated, "We had counseling sessions in bathrooms, in parked cars." Because of the media influence and the probability of crisis survivors reliving the experience by coming back to the crisis site, Casey suggested having counseling services away from the crisis site. In addition, it stands to reason to have counseling services off-site at a place that is adequate for the counseling process to take place. It seems that one needed available resource for a school counselor or counselor leader to consider when planning for the aftermath of a school shooting is *a place that is away from the school (or crisis site) and has adequate room for counseling.*

Other school shooting sites had similar problems. Fein et al.'s (2008) research makes clear that school counselors found providing counseling services to a great number of students an overwhelming task in the aftermath of school shootings. Austin (2003) asserted that Columbine counselors were overloaded with the needs of the students and staff. It seems that after such a tragedy, counseling needs are too much for normal counseling services.

Not only was Westside overwhelmed with counseling demands during the immediate aftermath, but according to Rachel she was so overwhelmed that “they needed to hire somebody else to help me” during the aftermath of the shooting. To address the number of students during the immediate aftermath, volunteer counselors were utilized. However, the volunteer counselors brought on a similar challenge. Gabby stated they were overwhelmed with volunteer counselors; she stated there were “tons of counselors”, and she was assigned to manage them. Assigning a person with a school counselor background to manage counseling services during a crisis was not just a Westside notion. Daniels et al.’s (2007) study explains that the school counselor for that crisis contacted and coordinated mental health helpers.

In addition school shooting sites had the same problem or challenge with having “tons of [volunteer] counselors” (Gabby). Casey exclaimed that at Westside, many volunteers claimed they were counselors but were not. Rhodes admonished that credentials were not “checked well enough”. Ruth, Rachel, and Gabby exclaimed that screening of volunteers eventually took place. Clifton mentioned an additional problem; she stated that her daughter worked with an outside counselor who did not have experience working with children and was not in-line with her belief system as a parent and a Christian. She pulled her daughter from counseling services. Fein et al.’s (2008) research, which covered four different shooting sites, indicated that there were no plans or guidelines for screening outside counselors’ credentials; some outside volunteer counselors did not have experience working with children; some volunteers were not trained professional counselors, and some volunteers attempted to influence crisis survivors with their religious ideology.

Newman et al. (2004) suggest that screening procedures are added to school crisis plans. It seems that not only a screening procedure, but perhaps the assigned counselor leader, director,

or supervisor may *keep a pre-screened list of community counselors* that are willing to assist in a crisis. The list might include their qualifications and counseling orientation. Such a list may need to be updated periodically. Thus when or if a crisis does occur, a screening process will have already taken place for many outside counselors, and it will most likely be easier to match up parents and children with appropriate counselors.

In regard to matching up crisis survivors with suitable counselors, Gabby explained this was one of her major responsibilities. She stated for crisis survivors she attempted “to figure out the level of their trauma” and pair the survivor with a specialty counselor or therapist. She later learned that this was called “psychological triage”. At other school shooting sites, school counselors were also asked to address psychological triage (Fein et al., 2008). Because of the demanding counseling needs and the fact that school counselors meet with children and parents immediately after a crisis, it seems prudent that school counselors *obtain training in evaluating psychological risk or trauma* due to experiencing a crisis. By obtaining such a skill, school counselors become an additional resource in coordinating counseling services.

Daniels et al.’s (2007) research indicated that not only did the school counselor meet with parents and students, but the school counselor provided “students with information about trauma” (p. 487). It seems plausible that providing crisis survivors with *educational materials on trauma and the long-term impact of a crisis* would help crisis survivors in dealing with the crisis. Lastly, in terms of Westside, because of the overwhelming counseling needs there the night of the crisis, not all crisis survivors may have received adequate or sufficient counseling. It appears that having a readily available *referral list or pre-screened list of community counselors* may be beneficial to hand to parents. According to the *Guide for preventing and responding to school violence* (2012), school counselors should “make referral forms available” (p. 28).

It is reasonable to conclude that having additional training and readily available resources would have benefited counselors in the immediate aftermath of the shooting at Westside. Beneficial readily available resources include, a counseling site, pre-screened list of community counselors, and educational materials. Furthermore, school counselors may have been an additional resource if they had training in evaluating psychological risk or trauma.

Goals, Strategies, and Interventions

School counselors' primary goals at Westside after the tragedy were providing reassurance and emotional security. In comparison with other school shootings, Fein et al. (2008) assert one school counselor's goal was to mitigate the impact of the trauma. While the other school counselors' goal was to follow the lead of the crisis management team. Of course, this led to assisting with logistics rather than group or individual counseling during the immediate aftermath of school shootings. One of the discrepancies for school counselors in Fein et al.'s (2008) research is that school counselors at times had to decide between the aims of the school and the aims of the crisis management team during the immediate aftermath of school shootings. In comparison, all school counselors at Westside were given directives from which they at some point shifted and then returned to fulfill. School counselors were also given directives that were logistics for the school, such as locking doors and cleaning out lockers, while at other times responding directly to the emotional and physical needs of the student population. Nevertheless, school counselors were not officially members of a crisis management team. A conclusion can be made that school counselors remain flexible during the immediate aftermath of a school shooting, a suggestion given by Gabby.

Westside school counselors utilized the following strategies and interventions: listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and

referrals. In terms of strategies and interventions, Fein et al.'s (2008) research indicates one school counselor used broad family therapy and utilized system principles. Another school counselor allowed crisis survivors to express themselves in a secure atmosphere. Lastly, school counselors used basic counseling and debriefing skills through regular and informal conversations with school leaders. A conclusion can be made that school counselors use basic counseling skills with individuals during the immediate aftermath of a school shooting; however, for families school counselors should consider family therapy techniques and for group counseling, school counselors might consider advanced group counseling strategies and interventions that are developmentally appropriate for their population.

Post-Crisis Awareness

School counselors' perceived expertness in helping self and others recognize and work through challenges to the recovery process included awareness and identification of the long-term impact on students, parents, teachers, and self, requests of additional assistance for student school counseling services, availability to teachers, developed strategy to address unwilling clients, obtained additional crisis training, and reflected on additional training effectiveness for such a crisis. Lessons learned included return to normal routine soon, do not invite crisis survivors back to site the night of the crisis, control the media, employ a screening process for outside counselors, group facilitators redirect people when necessary, include school counselors in the debriefing process. Interpretation for this finding or phase includes stressing and making available long-term care for others and mandating a support system and/or counseling for school counselors.

Long-term care

During the aftermath of the tragedy, some parents would not allow their children to participate in counseling in hopes that the children would move on from the tragedy (Newman et al., 2004). Newman et al. (2004) suggested that faculty attempt to educate parents with “flyers and checklists that inform parents of symptoms they should look out for” in their children (p. 274). According to Newman et al. (2004), this was also the case for some faculty and staff. The stigma of counseling kept some crisis survivors from dealing with the long-term impact of the crisis. Austin (2003) also stated that at Columbine, staff that did not receive counseling services over the summer break found it difficult to effectively conduct their job responsibilities; she suggested that staff should seek therapy.

However, one teacher complained that there was not enough counseling availability. The Westside teacher summed it up this way for teachers, “the school did not do enough to provide counseling or compensation for those who needed to take time off” (Newman et al., 2004, p. 226). However, Newman et al. (2004) explain, “the Arkansas Crime Victims’ Reparations Board provided for counseling services for six months”; however, the limitations of their services included “written requests for” approval (p. 276). The authors go on to explain that funds were available to individuals affected by the crisis to seek counseling, but red tape and the stigma of counseling kept some from receiving therapy. Rachel, the middle school counselor, at times invited “faculty and staff that wanted to come” to her home to provide a safe group environment in telling their stories. It is safe to conclude that school districts and school counselors may have to continue to educate and make counseling services available long after the crisis.

Mandated support system and/or counseling. Fein et al.’s (2008) research acknowledges that school counselors were unaware of the totality of the emotional toll the crisis

had on them. Therefore, they did not take advantage of counseling services for them. Eventually, school counselors began recognizing signs of the impact of the crisis. For example, one school counselor had difficulty sleeping because of the impact of the crisis.

At Westside, school counselors did not state that they were unaware of the emotional toll the crisis had on them; in fact, they stated the opposite in that they recognized immediately that they were impacted. For instance, Rachel stated the day of the shooting that the emotional toll for her was so, “that she does not know how capable she is of spearheading the counseling that will be necessary in the days to come” (Arkansas Democrat -Gazette Staff, 1998, p. 11A). School counselors did not seek counseling from outside counseling services (except that Rachel did speak with her pastor). They did participate in the debriefing offered to faculty and staff the day after the shooting. They also included peer and family support as a way of dealing with the personal impact of the tragedy. School counselors did not state that they had problems sleeping; however, Rachel stated, “I couldn’t get [deceased teacher’s name] uh, uh, her sweet face out of my mind ...”

Gabby suggested mandated de-briefing for all faculty and staff at some point after a crisis. However, the Westside school counselors participated in the debriefing process during the immediate aftermath of the crisis, but still were personally impacted by the crisis during the aftermath of the crisis. For example, a year after the crisis, Rachel felt “alone” and in need of someone to talk too. She eventually left her position at Westside and was able to find peer support in another district. It seems probable to conclude that after a rampage school shooting, mandating school counselors to develop peer supports and/or seek counseling would benefit school counselors as well as the population they serve.

Summary

This section provided interpretations or logical conclusions to the findings presented by the data through a working conceptually integrated framework. Throughout the discussion, the current study was compared with relevant literature to provide a context for interpretation. A recap of the interpretations for each phase has been included. The pre-crisis preparation phases included interpretations specific to assessment approaches, school counselors as members of crisis teams, and methods of establishing relationships are critical. The pre-crisis awareness phase included interpretations specific to periodically updating crisis training, school counselor supervisor with counseling training, and create an interactive process with outside counselors. The in-crisis protocol phase included interpretations specific to school counselors having a plan for personal family members during a crisis, establishing clear roles and expectations, and encompassing a variety of de-stressing techniques. The in-crisis awareness phase included interpretations specific to the ability to self-care and awareness of professional competency. The post-crisis recovery phase included interpretations specific to readily available resources as well as goals, strategies, and interventions for students, parents, and teachers. The post-crisis awareness phase included interpretations specific to stressing and making available long-term care for others and mandating a support system and/or counseling for school counselors. The next section provides conclusions drawn from the current research findings and interpretations.

Conclusion

This qualitative case study examined school counselors' courses of actions taken, perceived expertness, and lessons learned in responding to a rampage school shooting. The purpose of this study was to close the gap between school counselor's knowledge and skills that are significant in responding to a rampage school shooting by detailing the lived experience of

three school counselors' responses to a rampage school shooting. In other words, the study's findings provide meaning and understanding of rampage school shootings to other school counselors and relevant stakeholders. This section offers conclusions drawn from the six current research findings and corresponding interpretations. Conclusions have been provided through the phases of a template for an integrated theoretical framework, School Counselor Response to School Shootings Framework Template (S.C.R.S.S.T.) (see Table 4.2).

Pre-Crisis Preparation

Conclusion One. Effective ways school counselors prepare for a rampage school shooting include developing a holistic, team, and integrated assessment approach, have a defined role and clear expectations as a member of the school crisis team, and develop several ways of building quality relationships with students, teachers, and parents.

Conclusion one has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding or current research finding one, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the pre-crisis preparation phase addresses steps or actions unknowingly taken by school counselors in preparing for a rampage school shooting. Main considerations that were generated via findings and interpretations included assessments, crisis team, and relationships. Assessments was a main point because none of the school counselors were able to recognize violent at-risk signs present in the assailants from examining their individual characteristics. Research supports that assessments based on individual attributes of a child do not work in predicting rampage school shooters (O'Toole et al., 1999); however, more promising research on assessments supports a holistic, team, and integrated approach advocated by Verlinden et al. (2000), Dreal (2011), and Fein et al. (2004) (see Chapter II).

The crisis team was another main point. All interviewees, especially the previous middle school student's parent, previous middle school student, teacher, principal, and assigned counselor leader during the tragedy acknowledged school counselors were a vital and necessary help during and after the crisis. However, none of the school counselors were assigned as members of the school's crisis team. Related research found the same conclusion, that school counselors took on administrative roles and made important decisions during the crisis; although they had not been assigned a formal role on a crisis team before the crisis (Fein et al., 2008). It is reasonable that school counselors become crisis team members.

The last main point is relationships. All of the interviewees alluded to relationships being critical throughout the crisis. All of the interviewees discussed the school counselors' connection with students and parents as being an attribute in linking parents and students together, accounting for students, and helping the kids feel safe. White and Clifton discussed their relationships with school counselors from a parent and child's perspective playing a major part in their feeling safe and their recovery. Shively and Casey discussed how much they leaned on school counselors before and after the tragedy. Rhodes also discussed how her relationship with Ruth was an advantage during the crisis. Austin (2003) also stated that relationships, especially among school counselors, were integral in the recovery process of the Columbine school shooting. It is reasonable to assert that school counselors building relationships with students, parents, and teachers is an important aspect in preparing for a rampage school shooting.

Pre-Crisis Awareness

Conclusion Two. Effective ways that school counselors assess their limitations in skills and support for preparing to respond to a rampage school shooting include examining their most up-to-date crisis training, assist in developing and adhering to counselor leader's expectations for

crisis response, and assessing their information sharing process with outside counselors, students, and parents.

Conclusion two has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding or current research finding two, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the pre-crisis awareness phase addresses school counselors recognizing their limitations regarding their “technical and emotional readiness” in dealing with a rampage school shooting and their “need for personal and professional support” in responding to a rampage school shooting (McAdams & Keener, 2008, p. 391). Main considerations from this conclusion include crisis training, counselor crisis leader, and school-based counselors.

All school counselors agreed that they needed more training before the crisis. Rachel stated she did not have any “crisis skills” except for the skills she used in her normal counseling routine and her experience with previous school tragedies. After the shooting, all of the school counselors deemed it necessary to receive additional training such as N.O.V.A. training and upon reflecting on the training considered it beneficial in responding to a rampage school shooting. Ruth stated “I’ve been to other trainings but that’s the one [N.O.V.A. training] that, that I liked the best.” School counselors have a “legal and ethical duty to act reasonably to prevent school violence” (Hermann and Finn, 2002, para 24). It seems prudent that school counselors periodically receive updated crisis training.

All of the school counselors acknowledged needing assistance throughout the crisis, and they found Gabby, assigned counselor leader after the tragedy, beneficial. Ruth and Rhodes explained they could have benefited from guidance from a counseling leader, director, or supervisor during the crisis. Related research explains that school counselors accept leadership

responsibilities in the moment because of a lack of pre-defined counselor leaders (Fein et al., 2008). It seems reasonable for school districts to hire school counselor directors or supervisors, or at a minimum assign a counselor crisis leader with a counseling background and experience for times of crisis before a tragedy occurs, and that school counselors know, adhere, and assist in developing crisis protocols and expectations set by the counselor leader.

School counselors “make referrals to appropriate professionals when necessary” (ASCA, 2012). All of the school counselors admit that they make referrals to school-based counselors of counseling agencies; however, according to Casey the communication between the schools and community agencies was lacking. She goes on to assert that improved communication between school counselors and school-based counselors would help “to serve the kids better”. For example, one of the assailants saw an outside counselor for serious concerns but the school was unaware of those issues and did not have a chance to address school-associated problems in a school setting (Fox et al., 2003). Needless to say, it would serve school counselors well to assess their information-sharing process with school-based counselors or agencies as well as the students and parents at the center of the discussion.

In-Crisis Protocol

Conclusion Three. Effective ways that school counselors help to de-escalate and provide safety for others during a rampage school shooting include developing personal crisis protocols for school-attending family members, fulfill pre-determined responsibilities while remaining flexible, and employ a variety of de-stressing techniques in assisting others.

Conclusion three has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding or current research finding three, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the in-crisis protocol phase addresses

steps school counselors have taken to “efficiently expedite de-escalation and safe resolution” during a rampage school shooting (McAdams & Keener, 2008, p. 392). Main considerations include family members, expectations and flexibility, and de-stressing techniques.

Ruth and Rhodes, while attempting to fulfill directives during the crisis, found it difficult after realizing they had loved ones in the crisis. According to Rhodes, “... [when I] saw everything, it went from trying to help to I’ve got to find my niece”. Of course, worrying about loved ones while attempting to help others in a crisis brings about its own anxiety. To assist with such concerns, it appears beneficial for school counselors with family members in the same district to not only make sure family members are familiar with their school’s crisis protocols but also develop individual crisis plans that address communication and pick-up.

Interviewees were asked about school counselors’ primary responsibilities during a crisis and the results were mixed. For instance, Casey stated school counselors should help with “the safety of everyone” while Gabby stated school counselors should focus on the “physical” and “emotional” security of the “kids”. In addition, school counselors during the tragedy were asked to assist with logistics such as “locking doors” (Ruth, Rhodes) and helping with “supplies” (Shively). In comparison with similar studies, school counselors performed duties outside their normal expectations of assisting children (Fein et al., 2008; Daniels et al., 2007). The ASCA National Model (2012) makes plain that, “an effective school counselor is able to ... understand *the role of the school counselor* and the school counseling program in the school crisis plan” (p. 157). It seems safe to conclude that school counselors should have pre-determined clearly stated responsibilities but also remain flexible during a crisis.

The ASCA National Model (2012) states that “an effective school counselor is able to ... understand what defines a crisis, the appropriate response and a variety of intervention strategies

to meet the needs of the individual, group, or school community before, during, and after crisis response” (pp. 156–157). School counselors at times were not sure how to assist crisis survivors. Rhodes explained that at times she was not sure “if I was doing the right thing ... or saying the right thing”. The primary goals of school counselors doing the crisis were calming and reassuring students and some adults. School counselors would most likely have felt more competent and been better able to assist if they had an array of readily available de-stressing techniques in their professional toolkit to assist crisis survivors in the moment.

In-Crisis Awareness

Conclusion Four. The effective ways in which school counselors assess professional barriers during a rampage school shooting include employing self-care techniques and recognizing limitations in professional competency.

Conclusion four has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding, or current research finding four, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the in-crisis awareness phase addresses school counselors’ awareness and ability “to overcome potential barriers to handling” the crisis of a rampage school shooting (McAdams & Keener, 2008, p. 392). Main considerations include self-care and professional competency.

All of the school counselors experienced their own emotional turmoil during the crisis. Rachel was “petrified”, Rhodes was horrified, and Ruth was concerned and taken aback. Fein et al.’s (2008) research identified school counselors experiencing a mix of emotions during the crisis as well. It seems appropriate to conclude that school counselors may have benefited from self-care techniques such as learning to pause (take a moment to recollect), paying attention to the inner voice (identify negative talk or disturbing emotions), challenging negative self-talk, and

using positive affirmations (Nader & Nader, 2012). Having a variety of self-care techniques to call on seems reasonable for school counselors experiencing a crisis in their pursuit to help others.

All of the school counselors acknowledged their need for professional support in assisting others. According to the ASCA Ethical Standards for School Counselors (2010), “professional school counselors function within the boundaries of individual professional competence and accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions” (p. 5). By acknowledging their need for support, school counselors were able to work within the limits of their professional competencies and were open to assistance from others.

Post-Crisis Recovery

Conclusion Five. Effective ways in which school counselors assist in helping crisis survivors and the school recover from a rampage school shooting include being a trained resource, have readily available resources, clearly defined goals and expectations while remaining flexible, and relevant strategies and interventions in their professional toolkit.

Conclusion five has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding or current research finding five, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the post-recovery phase addresses school counselors assisting the school system and “crisis survivors [of a rampage school shooting] become able to manage the ... effects of the crisis sufficiently to resume pre-crisis levels of functioning” after the crisis (McAdams & Keener, 2008, p. 393). Main considerations include additional training, resources, expectations and flexibility, and strategies and interventions.

A major concern in the immediate aftermath of the school shooting included the handling of the number of crisis survivors and volunteer counselors. Blanche Gabby was assigned to manage “almost 700 people” and “tons of [volunteer] counselors” while attempting to conduct “psychological triage”. School counselors met with parents and students during the immediate aftermath, a task also completed by school counselors at other crisis sites (Daniels et al. (2007)). Because school counselors met with crisis survivors, it would have benefited crisis survivors and the management team if school counselors were able to assist in assessing student psychological trauma. Therefore, school counselors should strongly consider obtaining additional training in assessing psychological risk.

Counseling services also were problematic because not all outside school counselors were counselors or qualified professional counselors (Rhodes, Gabby, Casey, Ruth). Eventually, a screening process was implemented (Ruth, Rachel, Gabby). According to Fein et al. (2008), similar issues took place at four other school shooting sites because there were no plans or guidelines for screening outside counselors’ credentials. A handy item for Gabby to have would have been a pre-screened list of community counselors quickly to verify credentials as well as pass out to parents as a referral list. To help parents with understanding the potential for psychological harm, school counselors could have also benefited from having readily available educational materials on trauma and the long-term impact of a crisis to give to students and parents.

Another major topic was how to utilize school counselors. In the immediate aftermath of the tragedy, the main responsibilities of school counselors were not clear. They assisted with various tasks such as taking phone calls, cleaning out lockers, meeting with students and parents, and attending meetings. Neighboring school counselors also came to assist. Some of their tasks

included cleaning up “bloody keys” and going to a parent’s home to assist with a special needs child who had experienced the crisis (Gabby). One of the discrepancies for school counselors in Fein et al.’s (2008) research is that school counselors at times had to decide between the aims of the school and the aims of the crisis management team during the immediate aftermath of school shootings. School counselors are a vital resource and it serves school districts and crisis managers well to consider clear goals and expectations for school counselors to use best their skills during a crisis. However, because of the nature and unpredictability of crisis situations, it stands to reason that school counselors also remain flexible.

The last major idea for this section was school counselors’ use of strategies and interventions. All of the school counselors used basic counseling skills as well as a variety of other strategies to assist crisis survivors. Some of those strategies and interventions included listening skills, consoling, embodying genuineness and trust, group play therapy, guidance lessons, and referrals. Fein et al.’s (2008) research shows that school counselors not only used basic counseling skills but advanced skills such as family therapy and system principles. It is apparent that school counselors after a rampage school shooting have at their disposal relevant and appropriate strategies and interventions in their professional toolkit for their population.

Post-Crisis Awareness

Conclusion Six. Effective ways in which school counselors address challenges to the recovery process for others include continually stressing and making available long-term care for others while acknowledging and participating in peer support and/or counseling for self.

Conclusion six has been determined based on the guidelines for S.C.R.S.S.T., pre-crisis preparation finding, or current research finding six, and interpretation of that finding utilizing relevant research as additional context. The guideline for the post-crisis awareness phase

addresses school counselors' assisting self and others in recognizing and working through challenges to the recovery process. Main considerations include long-term care and mandated support.

All of the interviewees stated they experienced long-term impact of the crisis. In addition, each gave examples of the long-term impact on students and/or adults. According to Newman et al. (2004), some parents kept their children from counseling as a way to protect their children from reliving the experience, but by not receiving counseling services, students suffered long-term damage. Not only were some children not receiving counseling, but teachers as well missed out. However, one teacher explained that counseling services did not last long enough. Newman et al. (2004) suggested that faculty and staff stress receiving counseling services and provide a checklist and other educational materials to parents in the aftermath of a school shooting. Austin (2003) reported that staff that were unwilling to partake in counseling services found it difficult to perform their job duties. Rachel, the middle school counselor, at times invited "faculty and staff that wanted to come" to her home to provide a safe group environment in telling their stories. It seems reasonable that school counselors stress and make available long-term care for others in the aftermath of a school shooting.

All of the school counselors refused to receive counseling beyond the debriefing the day after the crisis. They each admitted having been impacted by the crisis. Rachel did speak with her pastor and eventually found peer support a year after the tragedy. Ruth and Rhodes provided peer support to each other. Fein et al.'s (2008) research indicates that school counselors refused counseling services as well, although, they too showed signs of being impacted by the crisis. It seems probable to conclude that after a rampage school shooting, requiring school counselors to

find peer support and/or participate in counseling would help school counselors and the population they serve.

This section provided conclusions drawn from the findings and interpretations of the study. A recap of the main considerations for each phase can be found in Table 5.1, S.C.R.S.S. Framework in brief. The next section provides recommendations for implementing, practice, and further research.

Table 5.1

S.C.R.S.S. Framework Considerations

Phases	S.C.R.S.S. General Guidelines	Main Considerations
PCP	Effective ways school counselors prepare for a rampage school shooting	Develop a holistic, team, and integrated assessment approach, have a defined role and clear expectations as a member of the school crisis team, and develop several ways of building quality relationships with students, teachers, and parents.
PCA	Effective ways school counselors assess their limitations in skills and support for preparing to respond to a rampage school shooting	School counselors examine their most up-to-date crisis training, assist in developing and adhere to counselor crisis leader's expectations for crisis response, and assess their information sharing process with outside counselors, students, and parents.
ICP	Effective ways school counselors help to de-escalate and provide safety for others during a rampage school shooting	Develop personal crisis protocols for school-attending family members, fulfill pre-determined responsibilities while remaining flexible, and employ a variety of de-stressing techniques in assisting others.
ICA	Effective ways school counselors assess professional barriers during a rampage school shooting	Employ self-care techniques and recognize limitations in professional competency.
PCR	Effective ways school counselors assist in helping crisis survivors and their school recover from a rampage school shooting	Be a trained resource, have readily available resources, clearly defined goals and expectations while remaining flexible, and relevant strategies and interventions in their professional toolkit.
PoCA	Effective ways school counselors address challenges to the recovery process for others	Continually stress and make available long-term care for others while acknowledging and participating in peer support and/or counseling for self.

Recommendations

A primary reason for this study was to provide understanding and meaning from the lived experience of a rampage school shooting, in so doing, make other school counselors aware of effective ways to respond to a rampage school shooting. The researcher involved theory building concepts and generated a conceptual framework, School Counselor Response to School Shootings Framework (S.C.R.S.S.), from the research to help guide school counselors in preparing and responding to a rampage school shooting (see Table 5.1, conceptual framework in brief). The conceptual framework provides informed and helpful actions that school counselors may take for preparation, in-crisis responses, and post-crisis responses.

Implementing and Practice

The framework benefits the school counselor and his or her school and/or building population. It minimizes the perils of being ill-prepared, ineffective, or emotionally at-risk during such a crisis by educating school counselors of precautions and technical skills useful in responding effectively to a rampage school shooting.

Benefiters of the current research are not limited to school counselors, but also include crisis response planners, school crisis teams, counselor educators, researchers, and administrators (administrators is defined here as formal leaders such as school counselor supervisors or assigned counselor crisis leaders, principals, and superintendents). The framework is not intended to replace a well-thought out, crisis team plan, and practiced/drilled crisis response plan that is specific to the demands of a school district. It may serve as a supplement or guide for crisis-response planners in determining effective ways of utilizing school counselors as a resource for such a crisis. The framework may be modified to use as part of a professional development session or series by administrators or counselor educators for district-wide school

counselors, district-wide administrators, and/or crisis team members in comprehending the nature and unique attributes school counselors may provide in helping in a rampage school shooting situation. Counselor educators may also teach the framework in counselor preparation programs. The framework is teacher-friendly because of its specific nature and division of units or logical transition phases through a time series; it is strongly suggested that when educating others of the framework that all of its phases are made applicable and chances are given for rehearsing skills where applicable.

School counselor supervisors may use the framework for supervision sessions with school counselors. The framework assists in defining school counselor roles, expectations, and technical skills, preparation and response assessments that are significant to responding successfully to such a crisis. Supervisors may be able to use the framework when actively engaged in such a crisis to guide, direct, and provide objective feedback to other school counselors as well as outside counselors.

The framework aligns with the ASCA professional competencies, standards, and ethics. Thus, ASCA may use the framework to help educate members of school counselors' roles, technical skills, and ideas useful in preparing and responding to a rampage school shooting. Similarly, state school counseling organizations may find the framework useful in the same way.

Several prevention measures are practiced throughout the nation in hopes of preventing another rampage school shooting. Prevention measures have assisted in reducing the likelihood of another rampage school shooting, but research has not proven a perfect solution or fool-proof remedy for preventing another rampage school shooting (see Chapter II). It is the researcher's hope that rampage school shootings become a thing of the past; however, it is possible that another rampage school shooting may occur and as these incidents occur, the nature of the crime

may change. If so, and more research is done, best practices and implementation may change over time. Therefore, although currently grounded in research, the S.C.R.S.S. Framework may change over time as well.

Further Research

Researchers may find the S.C.R.S.S. Framework useful for further research. Researchers may build on the current research by completing comparative case studies of rampage school shootings. Suggestions for comparative case studies would include utilizing the S.C.R.S.S. Framework as an analytical strategy or a theoretical proposition to assist in interpreting the findings and comparing the data with the current research (Yin, 2009). The current research dealt with a crisis that took place several years ago, thus the researcher used triangulation and additional interviews to get a more accurate and full picture of the school counselors' response to the tragedy; the researcher also compared relevant literature and similar studies to assist with credibility and issues of trustworthiness. Another suggestion is to compare school counselors' lived experience of a more recent school shooting with the current findings. Further suggestions include interviewing more than one school counselor and requesting interviews from individuals who witnessed or collaborated with school counselors throughout the crisis. Daniels et al. (2007), who interviewed one school counselor for their research, suggested future research include more school counselors' responses to overcome limitations of sample size.

Other dimensions or research aspects to study include items synthesized in the S.C.R.S.S. Framework. Such research might include school counselors' experiences of secondary trauma and the long-term impact of ignoring self-care, continued research on effective technical skills to use during and after such a crisis, school counselors' roles and expectations of current crisis teams, the preparation school counselors receive in counselor education crisis training programs,

and eventually research on the use or implementation of the S.C.R.S.S. Framework. Such research would continue to provide understanding and meaning of school counselors effectively responding to such a crisis.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Informed Consent Form *Adult, nonstudent participants*

I, Carleton H. Brown, am a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. The research at hand meets the expectations of the doctoral degree program. I am grateful for your consideration in participating in the research study. Your assistance will help me, the investigator, in adding important information to current research pertaining to rampage school shootings. The following information is given for general understanding of the research, guidelines of your engagement, and your rights as a participant.

Intent of the Study

The intent of this research is to identify critical ways school counselors respond to rampage school shootings. There is a need to support research that better equips school counselors who may experience such a tragedy, especially when preventive measures are not effective. The data obtained in this research will consist of interviews, records, and documents related to the tragedy.

Significance of the Study

The divide among knowledge and skills important for effective leadership in crisis response and preparation for counselors is wide.

- This study will assist in closing the gap in the literature on the role of school counselors in response to a rampage school shooting.
- This study will compare existing theories or research on crisis response frameworks and lessons learned from school rampage attacks.

Involvement in the Study

- Participation in this research study is voluntary.
- Your involvement will include an interview lasting approximately one hour. It is possible that you are contacted beyond the interview for follow up clarification questions.
- You have the choice whether to respond to a question or not respond throughout the interview process
- You have the option to end the interview at any time.

The location of documents, policies, and/or routines may be requested of individual participants in regard to crisis planning. Participants, if possible, may be asked to assist in obtaining said materials. Any school-associated materials obtained will be secured with the consent of the superintendent.

Participants' Risks

- Remembering a previous traumatic event may incur unsettling emotions such as anxiety and sadness.

- The researcher will not give any direct assistance to participants experiencing undesirable feelings as a by-product of the interview.
- Participants are recommended to seek professional help if there is a need as a result of conversing over the tragic event.

Participants' Rights

- You have the right to be informed of the purpose or objectives of said research.
- You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s).
- You have the right to stop your involvement in this study at any time.
- Your identification and your involvement will be kept confidential.
- You have the right to provide feedback to the findings of the researcher.
- You have the right to receive a final copy of this research study.

Confidentiality

All names of participants will be secretly stored by the principal investigator; pseudonyms will be used to protect names. All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by the law and the University policy.

Participant's Printed Name Date

Signature of Participant

Interviewer's Printed Name Date

Signature of Interviewer

Thank you for your involvement in this research study. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns before and/or after the interview, please feel free to contact any one of the following:

Researcher:

Carleton H. Brown

Doctoral Candidate

University of Arkansas at Fayetteville

Counseling Education Program

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Roy Farley

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Appendix B

Informed Consent Form *Former students who are over the age of 18*

I, Carleton H. Brown, am a doctoral candidate at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville. The research at hand meets the expectations of the doctoral degree program. I am grateful for your consideration in participating in the research study. Your assistance will help me, the investigator, in adding important information to current research pertaining to rampage school shootings. The following information is given for general understanding of the research, guidelines of your engagement, and your rights as a participant.

Intent of the Study

The intent of this research is to identify critical ways school counselors respond to rampage school shootings. There is a need to support research that better equips school counselors who may experience such a tragedy, especially when preventive measures are not effective. The data obtained in this research will consist of interviews, records, and documents related to the tragedy.

Significance of the Study

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- This study will assist in closing the gap in the literature on the role of school counselors in response to a rampage school shooting.
- This study will compare existing theories or research on crisis response frameworks and lessons learned from school rampage attacks.

Involvement in the Study

- Participation in this research study is voluntary.
- Your involvement will include an interview lasting approximately one hour. It is possible that you are contacted beyond the interview for follow up clarification questions.
- You have the choice whether to respond to a question or not respond throughout the interview process
- You have the option to end the interview at any time.

The location of documents, policies, and/or routines may be requested of individual participants in regard to crisis planning. Participants, if possible, may be asked to assist in obtaining said materials. Any school-associated materials obtained will be secured with the consent of the superintendent.

Participants' Risks

- Remembering a previous traumatic event may incur unsettling emotions such as anxiety and sadness.
- The researcher will not give any direct assistance to participants experiencing undesirable feelings as a by-product of the interview.

- Participants are recommended to seek professional help if there is a need as a result of conversing over the tragic event.

Participants' Rights

- You have the right to be informed of the purpose or objectives of said research.
- You have the right to refuse to answer any question(s).
- You have the right to stop your involvement in this study at any time.
- Your identification and your involvement will be kept confidential.
- You have the right to provide feedback to the findings of the researcher.
- You have the right to receive a final copy of this research study.

Confidentiality

All names of participants will be secretly stored by the principal investigator; pseudonyms will be used to protect names. All information collected will be kept confidential to the extent allowed by the law and the University policy.

Participant's Printed Name	Date	Signature of Participant
Interviewer's Printed Name	Date	Signature of Interviewer

Thank you for your involvement in this research study. If you have any questions, comments, or concerns before and/or after the interview, please feel free to contact any one of the following:

Researcher:

Carleton H. Brown
 Doctoral Candidate
 University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
 Counseling Education Program

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Roy Farley
 University of Arkansas at Fayetteville
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Appendix C

Interview Protocol: School Counselors

Before beginning interview, the investigator will review informed consent, the intention or objectives of the research, and request permission to record the interview

Interviewee's Name

Interviewee's Title

Interview Questions:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragic event, what kind of preparation or training did you possess for responding to the *impact* of a crisis on clients or students (building population)?

Before the tragic event, at any time did you have the opportunity to assess the perpetrators for violence or individuals who were aware of the possibility of the perpetrators committing such a violent act upon the school?

Before the tragic event, had you been informed and practiced in crisis response *procedures*?

Before the tragic event, were you considered part of a school crisis team? If so, what were your primary responsibilities for a crisis situation?

Before the tragic event, if you were not part of the crisis team, what was your role as a school counselor in emergency situations?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, in what ways would you say this type of crisis situation exceeded your skill levels?

Before the tragic event, explain any type of school counseling services or interventions provided to the perpetrators and the perceived effectiveness of such services.

Before the tragic event, explain any relationship you may have had with the perpetrators.

Before the tragic event, did you have a supportive relationship with a supervisor or other counselor in which you can go to regarding personal crises or client/student crisis or concerns? If so, please explain.

In-crisis Protocol

At the onset of the crisis, in what ways were you able to ensure the physical safety of those around you?

At the onset of the crisis, what were your immediate counseling priorities or goals?

In what ways was this crisis different from other crises you have faced with clients (building population) before this happening?

In-crisis Awareness

In what ways did you collaborate with other mental health professionals or other helping agencies?

In such a high stress situation, how might you describe your emotional state at the time and its effect on your decision-making?

In retrospect, are there ways or strategies of de-stressing self or others you have since learned that would have been helpful during this crisis?

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath, how were you able to assist crisis survivors with processing the crisis?

In what ways were you able to assist others through real and perceived losses or the grieving process as a result of the crisis?

After the crisis, were you able to establish and continue counseling relationships for an extended time with crisis survivors? Please explain.

Post-crisis Awareness

After the tragedy, what were the challenges, if any, in returning to your normal counseling duties?

After the tragedy, did you perceive challenges in others in underestimating the impact of the crisis experience? If so, please explain.

After the tragedy, did you attempt to assist unwilling clients (building population) who were impacted by the crisis? If so, please explain.

After the tragedy, did you seek assistance in dealing with the impact of the crisis in which you experienced? If so, please explain.

Additional

What advice would you give to other school counselors who may find themselves in a similar situation or may need help in developing a violence prevention and response plan for their school?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol: Other School Personnel

Before beginning interview, the investigator will review informed consent, the intention or objectives of the research, and request permission to record the interview

Interviewee's Name

Interviewee's Title

Interview Questions:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragedy, what was your perspective or expectations of school counselors' roles and responsibilities in crisis situations?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, what was your relationship like with the perpetrators?

Before the tragic event, explain any knowledge you might have heard or known regarding any perceived personal and/or mental health issues of the assailants.

Before the tragic event, explain the school's climate and perceived expectations of school counseling services in helping students with personal or mental health issues.

In-crisis Protocol

During the crisis, did you witness any school counselors providing safety for others? If so, please describe.

During the crisis, did you witness any school counselors taking-on responsibilities that were not the norm for school counselors? If so, please describe.

In-crisis Awareness

During the crisis, explain any actions you took that involved the collaboration or cooperation of school counselors and other mental health helpers.

During the crisis, describe your perception of the school counselors' emotional state.

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath of the crisis, explain any debriefing or counseling services which you received from school counselors or mental health professionals.

Regarding debriefing or counseling services provided, how might you rate its effectiveness?

Post-crisis Awareness

During and after the tragedy, please explain, if possible, any perceived difficulties or challenges of survivors receiving debriefing or counseling services from school counselors or other mental health professionals.

After the tragedy, explain any extended counseling you received or offered.

If you did not receive extended counseling, would it have been beneficial if you had received counseling services? Please explain.

Additional

In your professional opinion, what do you perceive as the most significant way school counselors might assist others during and after such a tragic event?

Appendix E

Interview Protocol: Previous Students

Before beginning interview, the investigator will review informed consent, the intention or objectives of the research, and request permission to record the interview

Interviewee's Name

Interviewee's Title

Interview Questions:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragedy, what was your perspective or expectations of school counselors' roles and responsibilities in crisis situations?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, what was your relationship like with the perpetrators?

Before the tragic event, explain any knowledge you might have heard or known regarding any perceived personal and/or mental health issues of the assailants.

Before the tragic event, explain the school's climate and perceived expectations of school counseling services in helping students with personal or mental health issues.

In-crisis Protocol

During the crisis, did school counselors assist in providing safety for you and/or your classmates? If so, please describe.

During the crisis, did you witness any school counselors taking-on responsibilities that were not the norm for school counselors? If so, please describe.

In-crisis Awareness

During the crisis, explain any actions you and/or your classmates took that involved the collaboration or cooperation of school counselors and other mental health helpers.

During the crisis, describe your perception of the school counselors' emotional state.

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath of the crisis, explain any debriefing or counseling services which you and/or your classmates received from school counselors or mental health professionals.

Regarding debriefing or counseling services provided, how might you rate its effectiveness?

Post-crisis Awareness

During and after the tragedy, please explain, if possible, any perceived difficulties or challenges of survivors receiving debriefing or counseling services from school counselors or other mental health professionals.

After the tragedy, explain any extended counseling you and/or your classmates received.

If you did not receive extended counseling, would it have been beneficial if you had received extended counseling services?

Additional

In your opinion, what do you perceive as the most significant way school counselors might assist others during and after such a tragic event?

Appendix F

Interview Protocol: Parents of Previous Students

Before beginning interview, the investigator will review informed consent, the intention or objectives of the research, and request permission to record the interview

Interviewee's Name

Interviewee's Title

Interview Questions:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragedy, what were your perspective (or expectations) and your child's perspective of school counselors' roles and responsibilities in crisis situations?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, what was your relationship or your child's relationship like with the perpetrators?

Before the tragic event, explain any knowledge you or your child might have heard or known regarding any perceived personal and/or mental health issues of the assailants.

Before the tragic event, explain the school's climate and perceived expectations of school counseling services in helping students with personal or mental health issues.

In-crisis Protocol

During the crisis, did you or your child witness any school counselors providing safety for others? If so, please describe.

During the crisis, did you witness any school counselors taking-on responsibilities that were not the norm for school counselors? If so, please describe.

In-crisis Awareness

During the crisis, explain any actions you or your child took that involved the collaboration or cooperation of school counselors and other mental health helpers.

During the crisis, describe your take on your child's perception of the school counselors' emotional state.

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath of the crisis, explain any debriefing or counseling services which you or your child received from school counselors or mental health professionals.

Regarding debriefing or counseling services provided, how might you rate its effectiveness?

Post-crisis Awareness

During and after the tragedy, please explain, if possible, any perceived difficulties or challenges of survivors receiving debriefing or counseling services from school counselors or other mental health professionals.

After the tragedy, explain any extended counseling you or your child received.

If you or your child did not receive extended counseling, would it have been beneficial if you or your child had received extended counseling services? Please explain.

Additional

In your opinion, what do you perceive as the most significant way school counselors' might assist others during and after such a tragic event?

How did you and your child's relationship with school counselors change after the tragedy?

Appendix G

Document/Policy Protocol

Document/Policy Name

Published Date

Sponsor or developer of document/policy

Purpose of document/policy

Format of document/policy

Primary motif or general message of document/policy

Is document/policy accessible to the public?

How or where can the document/policy be located?

Was the primary question of interest addressed in the document/policy: How did school counselors respond to a rampage school shooting?

Were any related questions addressed in the document/policy? If yes, provide details:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragic event, what were the school/district's crisis protocols or plans for crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence?

Before the tragic event, explain any preparation or training offered by the school and/or district in responding to crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence.

Before the tragic event, what was the role of school counselors in crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, in what ways did this type of crisis situation exceed school counselors' skill levels?

Before the tragic event, explain any type of school counseling services or interventions provided to the perpetrators and the perceived effectiveness of such services.

Before the tragic event, explain any relationship or timely conversations school counselors may have had with the perpetrators.

Before the tragic event, did school counselors have a supportive relationship or protocol in place with a supervisor or other counselor in which they could go to regarding client/student concerns or potential to violent behavior? If so, please explain.

In-crisis Protocol

At the onset of the crisis, what was the school counselors' location and instructions given to school counselors?

At the onset of the crisis, in what ways were school counselors able to ensure the physical safety of those around them?

At the onset of the crisis, what were school counselors' immediate counseling priorities or goals?

In what ways was this crisis different from other crises school counselors have faced with clients (building population) before this happening?

At the onset of the crisis, describe the parameters or boundaries in which the rampage school shooting took place.

In-crisis Awareness

In what ways did school counselors collaborate with other mental health professionals or other helping agencies?

In such a high stress situation, explain survivors' emotional state at the time and its effect on school counselors' and other mental health workers' decision-making.

Since the tragic event, what are strategies school counselors have learned that would have been helpful during the crisis?

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath, how were school counselors and other mental health workers able to assist crisis survivors with debriefing and processing the crisis?

In what ways were school counselors and other mental health workers able to assist others through real and perceived losses or the grieving process as a result of the crisis?

After the crisis, were school counselors and other mental health workers able to establish and continue counseling relationships for an extended time with crisis survivors? Please explain.

Post-crisis Awareness

After the tragedy, what were the challenges, if any, in school counselors returning to their normal counseling duties?

After the tragedy, were there challenges in faculty and staff in underestimating the impact of the crisis experience? If so, please explain.

After the tragedy, did school counselors and other mental health workers attempt to assist unwilling clients (building population) who were impacted by the crisis? If so, please explain.

After the tragedy, did school counselors and other mental health workers seek assistance in dealing with the impact of the crisis which they experienced? If so, please explain.

Additional

What are lessons learned from this crisis for other school counselors and mental health workers who may find themselves in a similar situation or may need help in developing a violence prevention and response plan for their school?

Appendix H

Media/Records Protocol

Media Name:

Published Date:

Actual Date of Incident:

Format of Media:

Primary motif or general message:

Differences between Personal Accounts and Media/Record Account

Was the primary question of interest addressed: How did school counselors respond to a rampage school shooting?

Were any related questions addressed in the media account? If yes, provide details:

Pre-crisis Preparation

Before the tragic event, what were the school/district's crisis protocols or plans for crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence?

Before the tragic event, explain any preparation or training offered by the school and/or district in responding to crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence.

Before the tragic event, what was the role of school counselors in crisis situations dealing with weapons or violence?

Pre-crisis Awareness

Before the tragic event, in what ways did this type of crisis situation exceed school counselors' skill levels?

Before the tragic event, explain any type of school counseling services or interventions provided to the perpetrators and the perceived effectiveness of such services.

Before the tragic event, explain any relationship or timely conversations school counselors may have had with the perpetrators.

Before the tragic event, did school counselors have a supportive relationship or protocol in place with a supervisor or other counselor in which they could go to regarding client/student concerns or potential to violent behavior? If so, please explain.

In-crisis Protocol

At the onset of the crisis, what was the school counselors' location and instructions given to school counselors?

At the onset of the crisis, in what ways were school counselors able to ensure the physical safety of those around them?

At the onset of the crisis, what were school counselors' immediate counseling priorities or goals?

In what ways was this crisis different from other crises school counselors have faced with clients (building population) before this happening?

At the onset of the crisis, describe the parameters or boundaries in which the rampage school shooting took place.

In-crisis Awareness

In what ways did school counselors collaborate with other mental health professionals or other helping agencies?

In such a high stress situation, explain survivors' emotional state at the time and its effect on school counselors' and other mental health workers' decision-making?

Since the tragic event, what are strategies school counselors have learned that would have been helpful during the crisis?

Post-crisis Recovery

During the immediate aftermath, how were school counselors and other mental health workers able to assist crisis survivors with debriefing and processing the crisis?

In what ways were school counselors and other mental health workers able to assist others through real and perceived losses or the grieving process as a result of the crisis?

After the crisis, were school counselors and other mental health workers able to establish and continue counseling relationships for an extended time with crisis survivors? Please explain.

Post-crisis Awareness

After the tragedy, what were challenges, if any, in school counselors returning to their normal counseling duties?

After the tragedy, were there challenges in faculty and staff in underestimating the impact of the crisis experience? If so, please explain.

After the tragedy, did school counselors and other mental health workers attempt to assist unwilling clients (building population) who were impacted by the crisis? If so, please explain.


After the tragedy, did school counselors and other mental health workers seek assistance in dealing with the impact of the crisis which they experienced? If so, please explain.

Additional

What are lessons learned from this crisis for other school counselors and mental health workers who may find themselves in a similar situation or may need help in developing a violence prevention and response plan for their school?

Appendix I

UARK IRB Approval Letter

	UNIVERSITY OF ARKANSAS	
		Office of Research Compliance Institutional Review Board
April 21, 2015		
MEMORANDUM		
TO:	Carleton Brown Rcy Farley	
FROM:	Rc Windwalker IRB Coordinator	
RE:	New Protocol Approval	
IRB Protocol #:	15-04-653	
Protocol Title:	<i>School Counselors' Lived Experience of a Rampage School Shooting</i>	
Review Type:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXEMPT <input type="checkbox"/> EXPEDITED <input type="checkbox"/> FULL IRB	
Approved Project Period:	Start Date: 04/20/2015 Expiration Date: 04/19/2016	
<p>Your protocol has been approved by the IRB. Protocols are approved for a maximum period of one year. If you wish to continue the project past the approved project period (see above), you must submit a request, using the form <i>Continuing Review for IRB Approved Projects</i>, prior to the expiration date. This form is available from the IRB Coordinator or on the Research Compliance website (https://vpred.uark.edu/units/rsqp/index.php). As a courtesy, you will be sent a reminder two months in advance of that date. However, failure to receive a reminder does not negate your obligation to make the request in sufficient time for review and approval. Federal regulations prohibit retroactive approval of continuation. Failure to receive approval to continue the project prior to the expiration date will result in Termination of the protocol approval. The IRB Coordinator can give you guidance on submission times.</p> <p>This protocol has been approved for 8 participants. If you wish to make any modifications in the approved protocol, including enrolling more than this number, you must seek approval <i>prior to</i> implementing those changes. All modifications should be requested in writing (email is acceptable) and must provide sufficient detail to assess the impact of the change.</p> <p>If you have questions or need any assistance from the IRB, please contact me at 109 MLKG Building, 5-2208, or irb@uark.edu.</p>		